

# **Language, Power and Democracy in *Othello*, Translated into Egyptian Dialect by Moustapha Safouan: a Realistic, Utopian or Dystopian Challenge?**

Nadia Bovino  
(Independent scholar)

**Abstract** Can the Egyptian dialect be a poetic language? Should it be taught at school? Can it convey literary serious/tragic contents? Moustapha Safouan thinks so, and he also thinks that such a linguistic revolution is necessary in Egypt to boost a democratic process to deprive the dictators of the fake legitimacy they gain from using Modern Standard Arabic instead of the vernacular linguistic variety. His translation of Shakespeare's *Othello* into Egyptian dialect, in 1998, is his way to put words into action. This paper presents Safouan's translation, a provocation and a successful challenge, and the debate it aroused. Language, writing devices, musicality of the translation and the spontaneous reaction of Egyptian native speakers are investigated to demonstrate that there are quite a few points in which Safouan succeeds in conveying sublime intellectual/aesthetic pleasure. Safouan's *Othello* shows that the Egyptian dialect can be a poetic language and therefore it might one day turn into a weapon in the hands of the people against the powerful ruling élites, as Safouan wishes.

**Summary** 1 Introduction: Which Language for Which Theatre? – 2 Language and Theatre in Egypt. – 3 Moustapha Safouan as a Translator. – 4 Translation as a Democratic Act: Safouan's Introduction to *Othello*. – 5 A Different Perspective on Translating into Egyptian Dialect: *Othello* in Dialect from Madiha Doss' Viewpoint. – 6 Safouan's Answer to Madiha Doss: Language, Power and Politics. – 7 Translation as Challenge: *Othello* and Safouan's Revolutionary Linguistic-Political Stand. – 8 Egyptian Dialect as a Poetic Weapon? – 9 Concluding Remarks.

**Keywords** Egyptian Dialect. *Othello*. Safouan. Power. Poetic Revolution.

## **1 Introduction: Which Language for Which Theatre?**

"In many speech communities two or more varieties of the same language are used by some speakers under different conditions [...] two varieties exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play". (Ferguson 1959, 232) and "For convenience of reference, the superposed variety in diglossias will be called H (high variety) [...] and the regional dialects will be called L (low varieties)" (234).

Ferguson's definition of diglossia perfectly fits the Arab world, Egypt included, which is characterized by the coexistence of at least two language

varieties: Modern Standard Arabic (henceforth MSA) and the so-called Egyptian dialect,<sup>1</sup> along with hundreds of other local language varieties. MSA is present throughout the Arab world, and is the superposed language variety, while each Arab country has one or more low varieties, or dialects, commonly spoken by the people. MSA enjoys immense social prestige, while dialects, despite their widespread use, are considered low varieties, tolerated in daily communication, but not in writing, particularly serious writing. Newspapers, serious television talk shows, political pamphlets and textbooks are all written in MSA, while dialect is used in daily communication, TV commercials, entertainment, songs, i.e., in informal situations. A reversal of roles is inconceivable. Choosing to use a particular language variety has ideological premises as well as consequences. In fact, dialect automatically marks the linguistic production with a low popular typecasting, while MSA marks the linguistic production with a high prestigious labelling. Of course most literary production is written in MSA while films are in dialect, unless they have a historical content, in which case they may either be in MSA or in a more obsolete language variety, Classical Arabic.

This article is a meaningful case study that investigates how language can be a proxy for social and political issues, with particular reference to the language commonly chosen for the Egyptian theatre, and to a revolutionary proposal.

## 2 Language and Theatre in Egypt

From its inception, the theatre in Egypt has been presented in both MSA and dialect, in both indigenous productions and in translations. But how are the two varieties used on stage? What functional role did and do they still have? And, when translating, what are the translational norms for the stage? Sameh F. Hanna<sup>2</sup> gives useful hints:

*Tamṣīr* (Egyptianization) was a dominant translational norm during the early stages of the history of Egyptian theatre. Through the work of both

1 MSA and dialect are respectively referred to with the Arabic terms *fuṣḥa* and *ʿāmmiyya*. It is very common to find these terms transliterated and not translated into foreign languages.

2 Sameh F. Hanna was born and educated in Egypt before going to the U.K. where he obtained his PhD from the University of Manchester. He worked as a lecturer in Translation at the Academy of Arts in Cairo, the American University in Cairo, Salford University and University of Manchester. Sameh Hanna is a founding member of the International Association of Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS).

Ya'qūb Ṣanū' (1839-1912)<sup>3</sup> and Muḥammad 'Uṭmān Ġalāl (1829-1898)<sup>4</sup> a whole range of French comedies were translated into the Arabic vernacular of the Egyptians.

Apart from using the Egyptian vernacular, *tamṣīr* involved, as Cachia puts it, "the transposition of the plot to an [...] Egyptian milieu, and that in turn entailed making the characters behave in accordance with locally accepted customs" (Cachia 1990, 36). *Ta'rīb*, that is, transposing the plot into an Arab milieu (36), was usually the norm in translating Shakespeare. There was hardly any Egyptianized Shakespearian tragedy. (Hanna 2005, 118)

In a footnote Hanna significantly adds:

Though in general terms Egyptian translators have tended to use classical Arabic as a means of signalling cultural/temporal distance (especially if the source text was set in an ancient historical time), there have been a few attempts where the Egyptian vernacular was used, especially if the source text was a social comedy, farce, children's drama.<sup>5</sup> (118)

Hanna also provides an excellent summary concerning the issue of which language should be used on stage:

The question of which language variety is most appropriate for theatre was a pressing issue of which early producers of theatre in Egypt, who were mostly translators and adaptors of foreign plays, were well aware. The founder of modern Egyptian theatre, Ya'qūb Ṣanū' (1839-1912) was aware that *fušḥa* was the medium for all forms of elitist cultural products. In the early 1870s, when he started producing theatre, *fušḥa* was the language of canonical literature and religious exegesis, the two main cultural products at the time. 'Āmmiyya was only associated with popular culture in the form of singing, shadow plays and folk tales, as well as epic, romance and *zajal* poetry, narrated or sung in local gatherings, such as cafes, markets, religious festivals or social celebrations.

Ṣanū''s choice of 'āmmiyya as the medium of his adaptations did not go down well with the traditional intellectual elite. [...] Ṣanū' [...] justifies his use of 'āmmiyya in connection with the theatrical genre he

3 Ya'qūb Ṣanū' (1839-1912) was a Jewish journalist, Egyptian nationalist and playwright (see Sadgrove 1998).

4 Muḥammad 'Uṭmān Ġalāl (1828-1898), Egyptian dramatist, author and translator. He 'Egyptianized' several plays by Molière including a famous version of *Tartuffe* (see Somekh 1998, 778).

5 For detailed studies of the language of Egyptian drama see Somekh 1991, 37-45, and Nasser 2010, 355-67.

used for his performances. "Comedy", says Şanū' in *Molière mişr wa-mā yuqāşihī*, "deals with what happens among people, and hence it must be a reflection of reality and its language an emulation of the language used by all people in their daily conversations" ('Omar 'Aṭiyya 1967, 79). Since Şanū', the association between 'āmmiyya and staged comedy became the norm for playwrights, drama translators and adaptors. (Hanna 2009, 162)

An interesting suggestion to resolve the language issue on stage came from Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm.<sup>6</sup> In the appendix to his play *al-Şafqa* (The Deal), written in 1956, and in notes inserted in his play *al-Warṭa* (The Dilemma), written in 1966, he explained his theory about what he termed *al-luġa al-ṭālīṭa* (the third language), to be used on stage, one that could be read in MSA but that could also be performed in a way which, while not exactly the Egyptian dialect, was certainly comprehensible to a larger population than the literate élite. His 'third language' would leave the actors free to perform the written text either in MSA or in dialect. So, in the 'third language' lexicon, syntax and expressions should be those in common between MSA and Egyptian dialect, while pronunciation could change according to the actor's sensibility, or, rather, according to the stage directions.

However, the double association dialect/comedy and MSA/tragedy has always been extant, as Hanna notably observes: "If opinions on translating comedy in 'āmmiyya have been divided, publishing a translation of a tragedy totally in 'āmmiyya has almost been anathema in the cultural history of modern Egypt" (Hanna 2009, 265).

The translations of *Othello* which appeared throughout the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries in Egypt are no exception to this rule. "The most celebrated and best known translation of *Othello* is that of Ḥalīl Muṭrān, the Lebanese-born poet who immigrated to Egypt. He translated *Othello*<sup>7</sup> at the specific request of George Abyaḍ, actor, director and head of the theatrical troupe known by his name" (Ghazoul 1998, 2). In his introduction, Ḥalīl Muṭrān explained his translational choices and his view of the tragedy. In his opinion *Othello* was originally an Arabic story, to be given back to where it belonged: i.e. the Arab world. Hence, the name of the protagonist was 'restored' to its alleged Arabic origin, becoming 'Uṭayl, while Desdemona turned into the Arabic sounding form *Daydamūna*. More than a translation, Ḥalīl Muṭrān carried out what he called an 'Arabization', where the protagonist became victim of wicked foreign deceit, much more in control of himself than in the original text. Muṭrān's *Othello* became a

6 Prominent Egyptian writer (1898-1987), one of the pioneers of the Arabic novel and drama (see Starkey 1998, 263-5).

7 Performed at the Cairo Opera House on March 30th 1912.

proud, feared Arab leader.<sup>8</sup> The offensive expressions of the Shakespearian text were often censured by the translator, Christian religious references were either removed or changed and the same happened to several references to sex and wine. The translator protected 'Uṭayl's public image as one would do for a political leader. As to the language, Muṭrān declared his wish to 'kill' dialect, responsible for having destroyed the unity of the Arab Community: "If dialect were mine, I would kill it without any regret, and my crime would but be revenge for a glory that used to exceed all glories, that has been falling from its untainted eloquent golden frame to the level of filthy earthenware feet, and still continues to descend towards them, that still disfigure it. Revenge for a Community whose unity dialect has scattered" (Muṭrān 1912, 4). Instead of dialect, Muṭrān chose to use a language that today sounds like an impressively elegant, elaborated variety of MSA. However, in 1912, this language variety probably sounded more common and less elaborate. In fact, the translator labelled his language variety as 'intermediate' (4). The ideology behind this choice is clear: in Muṭrān's view, MSA could be the central bond of identity between the Arabs in different countries. In 1912 the dream of pan-Arab unity was still alive, and the Lebanese Christian Muṭrān living in Egypt, who could not base his nationalist idea on religion or citizenship, chose language as the basis of pan-Arab pride. His celebrated translation would remain the main one until 1978, when the Palestinian poet Ġabrā Ibrāhīm Ġabrā<sup>9</sup> translated *Othello* from English.

In his introduction to the translation, Ġabrā refuted Muṭrān's theories about the origin of *Othello*, and translated with care, wishing to convey the Shakespearian text in all its nuances, with no censures. He distributed the text in lines corresponding to the original text and he added footnotes meant to aid the reader. While Muṭrān's was not a translation but an 'Arabization', Ġabrā's was the first real translation of *Othello* into MSA. One can't help noticing that, unlike his predecessor, Ġabrā no longer used *Othello* as a means to validate national pride. Therefore his language, free of pan-Arab national pride, became lighter and the translation was definitely more faithful to the original text than Muṭrān's. He used a reader-friendly MSA that still sounds fluent and elegant today, but not at all obsolete.

The translations following Ġabrā's are accomplished works too, based on the original English text. They give detailed information about the English sources they are based on, and they have detailed footnotes. This is the

8 For further reading see Hanna 2005, 109-28.

9 Ġabrā Ibrāhīm Ġabrā (1920-1994) was a Palestinian author of Syriac Orthodox origin educated in Jerusalem and later at Cambridge University. Poet, novelist, painter, translator and literary critic, he also translated some English works into Arabic (see Boullata 1998, 405).

case with Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Badawī, a scholar of English and Arabic literature, who published his translation in 2004, with the title *Ma'sāt 'Uṭayl*. In 2005, Muḥammad Muḥammad 'Inānī, a Professor of English Language and Literature at Cairo University, published his *'Uṭayl*, an excellent work with an introduction of 64 pages and very detailed footnotes that compare his translation with the original English text. His translation is not only meant to be read or performed, but also to be used as an object of study. What is the language used in both translations? Again, it is MSA. The anathema of using dialect in tragedies is still there. Yet, in 1998, someone not only challenged this tradition, but did it with reasons that make of him a very interesting case. It was Moustapha Safouan.<sup>10</sup>

### 3 Moustapha Safouan as a Translator

A vibrant awareness of the symbolic value of linguistic choices is the motive lying behind Moustapha Safouan's translation of *Othello* into Egyptian dialect.<sup>11</sup> His central idea is: language and power are strongly linked, and power takes advantage of the diglossia present in the Arabic world in order to prevent the democratization process. With diglossia, the literary language enjoys a prominent prestigious position which is superior to the one assigned to the vernacular language. Such a language is also a useful means in the hands of the leading class to consolidate their power and to keep on exploiting the masses. These ideas are developed in Safouan's *al-Kitāba wa-l-sulṭa* (Writing and Power) (2001) as well as in his *Limādā al-'Arab laysū aḥrār<sup>an</sup>* (Why are the Arabs not Free?).

Actually, these are not original ideas at all, but refer to a topic that both sociology and political sciences have deeply analyzed. However, Safouan develops it in quite an original way because, unlike other scholars who simply expose their theories, he puts his words into action.

His translation of *Othello* and its introduction, written in Egyptian vernacular too, prove it. Assuming that the literary language hinders democracy, the best way to stand up against such an impediment is to rebel

10 Moustapha Safouan is an Egyptian psychoanalyst with a sound philosophical competence, who has been living in France since 1949. His philosophical, literary and psychological knowledge endow him with a particularly deep critical aptitude that enables him to suggest original psychoanalytic literary interpretations, along with political ones. Since Safouan has been living in Europe longer than he lived in Egypt, and he's better known in Europe than in his home country, I prefer to use the written form of his name that is to be found in the author's French writings as well as in other European translations.

11 Before him, Nu'mān 'Āšūr had translated *Othello* into the Egyptian dialect, in 1984. Nu'mān 'Āšūr's experiment was an example of 'Egyptianization', that deserves deep study. Analyzing 'Āšūr's translation here would go well beyond the scope of this paper. It suffices here to mention it, and to observe that it did not have positive feedback.

against that language simply by ignoring it, and by taking up the vernacular language in writing. His *Othello* in Egyptian dialect sounds like a challenge to traditional translational norms from its opening line, which is a dedication:

إهداء إلى محمد على عبد المولى!

Dedicated to Muḥammad 'Alī 'Abd al-Mawlā!<sup>12</sup> (Safouan 1998)

Muḥammad 'Alī 'Abd al-Mawlā may be any common man, the man on the street, the one who can read very little, the one who is not familiar with the literary language. He's the one to whom Safouan chooses to dedicate no less than Shakespeare's *Othello*, in his own native language, namely, the Egyptian dialect.

Reading Safouan in the Egyptian dialect is at first a puzzling experience. The dialect used by Safouan deeply affects the Egyptian reader, who is used to reading in MSA. The Egyptian reader normally tunes into the MSA mode while reading out loud. When required to read out loud in the vernacular, he will tend to pronounce sounds and word endings as they would be in the literary mode.<sup>13</sup> It is an unusual experience for the eye too, since he is not used to seeing vernacular words in writing, some of which are very long, resulting from the orthographical duplication of what actually happens in speaking: up to two or three suffixes are pasted to a single word, while in MSA they would be different words.<sup>14</sup> 'Interior reading' too is an unusual experience, because the reader is not used to seeing the written form of dialect, with its peculiar un-normed spelling,<sup>15</sup>

12 Unless otherwise stated, translations into English are mine.

13 This reaction reminds us of Tawfiq al-Hakīm's proposal of a 'Third Language' for theatre. For further reading about this proposal and about the search for a language on the Egyptian stage see R. Dorigo 2006, 173-91.

14 For example, on page 14 of Safouan's introduction to his translation we read the Egyptian dialect word *Māyigayyirhāš* (he does not change it). It is the result of 4 different elements pasted together: *mā* (negation) + *yigayyir* (verb) + *hā* (suffix pronoun) + *š* (Egyptian dialect suffix used in negative sentences). In MSA the same meaning would read differently: *lā iuḡayyir<sup>u</sup> šay<sup>an</sup> fihā* (he does not change anything in it). So, instead of four MSA words, the reader here finds only a long single one. This feature of the Egyptian dialect clearly denotes that it is an agglutinative language, with reference to the definition introduced by Wilhelm Von Humboldt who classified languages from a morphological point of view, back in 1836. For a similar example see also Behnstedt, Woidich 2005, 37, and Durand 2009, 32.

15 For example, a peculiar feature recurring in Safouan's Egyptian dialect spelling concerns the way he writes numbers. On page 5 of Safouan's introduction he writes the number *ḥamsa talāf* (five thousand) writing the letter *t* at the beginning of the second word. In MSA the spelling would be *ḥamsat ālāf*, with the *t* at the end of the first word. The effect of Safouan's dialect spelling on the reader is quite bewildering.

especially in a serious dramatic literary work. Nevertheless, after a few lines, the Egyptian reader experiences what in most parts of Europe is usually taken for granted: reading in one's own mother tongue.

A similar puzzling feeling at first affects whoever tries to translate Safouan's language into English. In fact, the translator is first of all a reader who goes through the same odd experience of dialect reading mentioned above. On setting out to translate, the translator naturally wonders if it is possible to somehow mark in translation the spoken language quality of Safouan's language, a variety that sounds completely different from the one normally used in Arabic writing, i.e. MSA.

Actually, the vernacular variety used in Safouan's writing is understood everywhere in Egypt, as well as in almost the entire Arab world, although it is not recognized as official. In order to mark in translation that Safouan's starting language is not the standard variety, it would be necessary to use an un-normed English understood by all native English speakers, a sort of slang English variety understood by millions of English native speakers. Such a variety does not exist.

#### 4 Translation as a Democratic Act: Safouan's Introduction to *Othello*

Safouan begins his introduction with a polemic opening line, a quotation from Euripides<sup>16</sup> chosen for the number of key words to be found in it: "No logic will overthrow the traditions we have received from our fathers, traditions as old as time, no matter what clever arguments are thought up by the greatest minds. Euripides"<sup>17</sup> (Safouan 2007, 47).

'Traditions', 'our fathers', 'overthrow', 'think up', 'clever arguments' are key words corresponding to topics developed by Safouan, who declares he is for change, although he is also aware of the many obstacles that hinder that change. He desires a democratic kind of change, that consists in giving the best of literature to everybody, including the millions of people who have not mastered the literary language, but who may understand writing in the vernacular:

16 Here Safouan mentions only Euripides, but not his detailed source, which can be found in Safouan 2007, 54, in a footnote where the translator clearly refers to Euripides's *Bacchae*, lines 168-171.

17 Safouan's writings are full of quotations of worldwide prized names that have made the history of literature and philosophy, as well as of contemporary scholars. Here are those he mentions in his introduction to his translation of *Othello*: Euripides, Dante, Virgil, Horatius, Malraux, Pushkin, Gogol, Shalamov, Solzhenitsyn, Günter Grass, Beckett, Yves Bonnefoy, Yeats, Racine, Salām al-Kindī, Ṣalāḥ Ḡāḥīn, Fu'ād Ḥaddād, Dominique Valbelle. One can't fail to notice that Safouan's cultural profile is astonishing.

The purpose of translating into dialect is clear: a day will come when Muḥammad 'Alī 'Abd al-Mawlā, and millions like him, will be able to read great writers, ours and others, in the language they have learnt while nursing at their mothers' breasts, the language they have lived with and will speak until they die. (Safouan 1998, 5)

As for the intellectuals, Safouan clearly states what their duty should be: to tell the truth, without fearing authorities,<sup>18</sup> a duty that they have often betrayed to become slaves to power, which wouldn't have been possible if writing had been more accessible. He observes that writing has always been in the hands of the powerful and of the scribes, and this has created a deep chasm between the élite and the common people. Writers used to be part of the élite, because they wanted to keep and defend their prestigious position:

Living peoples owe their lives to writers, but not because writers can advise them. Just listen to people's jokes and you will see that people know everything, especially about power, its appetites, its authority, its arrogance, its strength, its splitting people into different social classes one above the other, and about the false rhetoric lying behind praising [...] Nevertheless, great writers are the first dwelling place for ultimate truths, and those who look straight at the truth do not fear the Sultan. (Safouan 1998, 5)

Is it possible to imagine a different history? Safouan hopes so, and he mentions the European example:

Who can imagine what destiny Europe would have had if Latin had remained the language for literature, science and philosophy? The fall of such hegemony is a story worth telling [...]

The first to speak to people in their language in Europe [...] were the fools, or love poets, especially in the south of France, where there were more than two languages, and in Italy, where there used to be dozens of languages. After them, came Dante [...] who decided to compose poetry in the living languages of his time, in a book that is the equivalent of Horatio's *Art of Poetry*, from which he took inspiration for the title of his book: *De Vulgari Eloquentia*.<sup>19</sup> The book starts with the distinc-

18 Safouan's 'European cultural profile' probably includes Michel Foucault's essays on the relation between State and People. See e.g. Foucault 2014.

19 Nevertheless, *De Vulgari Eloquentia* was written in Latin and not in the Tuscan dialect. Safouan does not comment on the paradox, but he does notice that the book is not complete, and he observes that Dante did not finish it probably because he realized that facts would be more effective than theories. So, he set out to write *The Divine Comedy*.

tion between the spoken language, that we all use without studying, by imitating our governesses, and a second type of language, a secondary language, that the Romans used to call 'grammatical'. Then, after this distinction, he writes: "Of these two kinds of language, the more noble is the vernacular". (Dante I.i.4, trans. Botterill 1996) It's not a complicated sentence: subject, verb, full stop. But this sentence has marked the declaration of independence for the European languages. Next, Dante explains his reasons: "First, because it was the language originally used by the human race; second because the whole world employs it, though with different pronunciations and using different words; and third because it is natural for us, while the other is, in constraint, artificial" (Dante I.i.4) [...] Considering that the issue is a general one, even if here it is specifically about Latin and Italian, it can occur at any time or in any place. (Safouan 1998, 7)

If the issue is general, and can occur at any time in any place, of course it can well describe Egypt today.

Safouan then moves to the heart of the matter, i.e. the relationship between language and power:

After these theoretical preliminaries, Dante asks (and here his book's political and not merely literary objective becomes plain) what language, amongst at least fourteen languages in Italy, deserves to be the language of government, or rather the language that could unify Italy in the absence of a unified political authority? It is worth noting that his criterion was neither beauty nor practical utility, but the suitability of the language for poetry. In his view the echoes and strength of poetic language would far outstrip the domain of poetry and even of any aesthetic conception of language to inform the tensions of real life, its battles and ambiguities. (Safouan 2007, 51)

So, Dante thinks that poetic language could become bond of identity even without political unity, and that this is possible despite a political-linguistic situation far more complex than the present Egyptian one, for different reasons. First, the language varieties spoken in Dante's Italy were more numerous than those present in Egypt today, where diglossia is the prevailing context.<sup>20</sup> But, above all, it should be noted that while Egypt has a political unity today, Dante's Italy didn't. Nevertheless, Dante started the process that led to transforming the Tuscan dialect into poetic language, literary language and national language. Despite its national unity, and

<sup>20</sup> A dualist definition of diglossia is of course a simplification and it is now outdated. I chose here to use the dichotomous meaning of the term, and to focus only on MSA and the Cairene dialect because it is functional to my argument.

despite the fact that the Cairene dialect is already understood and used all over the country, Egypt is still far from transforming this linguistic variety into a literary language.

Safouan strongly agrees with Dante's theoretical basis but, most of all, he appreciates that Dante not only stated his theories, but put his words into action:

[...] But the book is not finished. It stops in the middle of a sentence, and it is very likely that Dante stopped because he realized that the solution to this issue couldn't be found by comparing theories but only by putting words into action. So he set out to write *The Divine Comedy*, which is still today considered the greatest poetic masterpiece in the history of European literature, and which actually gave the Italian language the shape it still retains today. (Safouan 1998, 8)

*The Divine Comedy* is actually the best way to show that the Tuscan dialect is not inferior to Latin.

Safouan too wants to prove that the Egyptian dialect is not inferior to MSA. His translation of *Othello* has this specific purpose. But why does he choose Shakespeare and why *Othello*? "Why Shakespeare? Because he's the most poetic among God's creatures, and so if the vernacular succeeds with him, who will feel annoyed?" (Safouan 1998, 11). If Safouan succeeds in translating him in an effective poetic way using the Egyptian dialect, he will prove that the vernacular linguistic variety is able to convey tragic, dramatic, and poetic contents in the best possible way. But why *Othello*?

Why *Othello*? Because *Othello* speaks as if he were constantly looking in a mirror to check that his image has all the perfections that fascinate the eye and please society. The reason for an existence enthralled by such an ideal image is articulated by *Othello* when he says, thanks to Shakespeare's divine intuition: "O curse on marriage!/ That we can call these delicate creatures ours,/ And not their appetites". (Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act 3, iii: 268-270) *Othello* thus betrays his inability to understand, or his incapacity to admit, that desire is a gift: he is not content with having obtained Desdemona's desire; what he wants is to possess it so that the beloved may not take it back or turn it to some other object, as if it were a house, a field, or a cow. This of course is impossible unless she is transformed into an icon, a statue or an inert corpse. And in fact he kills her.<sup>21</sup> (Safouan 1998, 11)

21 As stated in the introduction, Safouan's multi-faceted cultural profile enables him to suggest original literary interpretations. Here is an example of a psychoanalytic interpretation that plainly reveals the translator's psychoanalytical background.

Safouan finds in the Moor all the features of a leader, but the leader he has in mind, in 1998, is a bloody dictator, blinded by his desire for possession, full of weaknesses and limits that lead him to kill those he loves. Othello has the same kind of power which is concentrated in the hands of the Arab leaders in the 1990s, and so the reason why Safouan chooses to translate it is mainly a political one: "More than any other play I know, Othello teaches us to temper this natural infatuation for ideals that annihilates thought" (Safouan 2007, 53). Believing that someone can be perfect, no matter what 'perfect' means, believing that someone may be an exemplary ideal for the others, thinking that someone is always right, being unable to see defects and weaknesses, in ourselves or in our role models, is a mistake that, if committed by a leader, can lead to irrevocable consequences.<sup>22</sup>

About the translation itself, Safouan states that translating into dialect is exactly like translating into other languages, from which it can be concluded that the Egyptian dialect, like MSA, as well as any other language,<sup>23</sup> is a linguistic means suitable for expressing any meaning.<sup>24</sup>

It is worth noting finally that translating *Othello* into spoken Arabic posed no difficulties other than those that occur when translating such a work into any other language: the metaphors that lose their beauty and impact because the metaphorical word does not evoke the same associations in the mind of the reader of the translated text; the mental switches based on double meanings; the metonymies that lose their meaning in a different cultural context; the differences in the syntactic structures that call for a different phrasing; the ellipses that have to be made explicit; the idiomatic expressions that have to be reworked in order to touch the reader's linguistic sensibility, and so on. [...] I tried as much as possible to produce a translation that could be heard as well as read. If aiming at perfection could be considered an incentive to do better, I can say that I do hope to see someone better my translation. The important point for any translator is that there are no two words belonging to two different languages that have exactly the same meaning. [...] The use of any word, from an article to a proper name, especially in its poetic use, sets in motion the whole system of the language with its semantic implications, which give the word its unique resonance, its specific weight. (Safouan 2007, 53)

22 A telling example of the reuse of literary tradition in dealing with political power is a novel by Nobel Prize winner writer Nağīb Maḥfūz's, and notably *Layālī alf Layla*.

23 For further reading on the status of Arabic dialects see Suleiman 2013, 239-50.

24 Fred Donner's article *al-Lahağāt al-'Arabīyya wa ahammiyyat dirāsatiḥā*, is interesting with regards to this: although calling for a recognition of the dignity of Arabic dialects and studying them in the light of modern linguistics studies, Donner does not call for using dialects in writing (Donner 1993, 11).

In my opinion these words have a revolutionary import in the present Egyptian linguistic context. Stating that translating into dialect is like translating into other languages Safouan challenges the dominating belief in Egypt today, or rather the dominating prejudice, that the Egyptian dialect falls short of serious-tragic contents. His translation is therefore a revolutionary experiment by Egyptian standards. As to his understanding of 'translation', he talks about poets and translators who should not bring Shakespeare or other writers to us, but who should lead us to them. It's a translation in the 'foreignization' sense, the opposite of a 'domesticating' translation.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, he wishes for his translations to help bridge the gap between scholars and common people:

However, [...] the translation into Arabic shouldn't be an Arabization but, rather, the use of a language to get out from under a linguistic captivity. You cannot accomplish this simply by transferring meanings or superficial references. The shape, or a prolonged use, is more important here. If the writer has sensibility and mastery to such a degree that enables him to break the syntax, to abbreviate, to omit, he should do so! It is well known that prose makes words lose most of the matter they possess in poetry, hence I declare the inferiority of the present translation: it's in prose, while the original text is in poetry, [...] I cannot state that I wrote this translation hoping to open a door for Ṣalāḥ Ġāhīn or a new Fu'ād Ḥaddād,<sup>26</sup> to bring us Shakespeare or others, or, rather, to carry us towards them, since this last hope of mine - if you want the truth - has failed. I just state that my translation witnesses that I did all I could to tear down the obstacle that has always oppressed us, the obstacle between us, 'those who have studied', and common people. (Safouan 1998, 14-5)

Was his endeavor appreciated? What feedback did it arouse?

25 We use here the notions of 'domesticating' practices and 'foreignizing' practices in the sense of Lawrence Venuti 1995. Safouan's idea of translation clearly reflects Venuti's viewpoint on the need to introduce foreignizing practices in translation.

26 Ṣalāḥ Ġāhīn (1930-1986) and Fu'ād Ḥaddād (1927-1985) are Egyptian poets and friends who promoted using dialect in poetry in the 60s. See Booth 1998a and Booth 1998b.

## 5 A Different Perspective on Translating into Egyptian Dialect: *Othello* in Dialect from Madiha Doss' Viewpoint

In an article that appeared in the magazine *Wiḡhāt naẓar*, in October 1999, called *Šaksbīr bi-l-luġa-al-‘āmmiyya man yaqra’uhu?* (Shakespeare in dialect, who reads him?)<sup>27</sup> Madiha Doss<sup>28</sup> expresses her doubts about Moustapha Safouan's translation.

Briefly summarizing the history of the Egyptian theatre since its inception, she observes that dialect has been used on stage since the very beginning and she denies any originality to Safouan's translation due to the language used. Far from being only Safouan's worry, the concern about being understood by the popular masses dates back to the first stages of Egyptian theatre: "So, the second half of the nineteenth century sees the beginning of the Theatre Movement in Egypt, and dialect has been the means of expression used by this Movement since Ya'qūb Ṣanū' founded the first Theatrical Company in Egypt" (Doss 1999, 68). She points out that when Safouan starts writing in dialect, he is simply re-inventing the wheel! It is no breaking news that choosing to write in dialect is motivated by the desire to reach the common readers, bridging the gap between them and the world of the scholars. It was true in the past, and it is still so today.

Starting from identical grounds, Safouan and Doss reach opposite conclusions. In fact, Doss questions both the need of translating into dialect, and the type of text chosen. She does not believe that translating Shakespeare into dialect will really bring literature within the common audiences' reach, nor that writing in dialect is still as necessary today as it was in the past. She correctly points out that MSA today, compared to the literary variety used a century ago, has been simplified and brought into every home by means of the radio and TV. Moreover, increasing literacy has certainly made a great contribution to the spread of written Arabic in the country. So, according to Doss, there's no longer the need to use dialect to be widely understood. MSA is enough.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, she points out that Safouan's introduction, although in dialect, has historical, philosophical

27 We might contentiously ask, paraphrasing Madiha Doss: 'Shakespeare in MSA, who reads him?'

28 A University Professor at the University of Cairo, specialized in Arabic language, linguistics and philology. Her membership in the *International Association for the Study of Middle and Mixed Arabic* denotes her absence of prejudice against Arabic vernacular language varieties. I use the same form of her name that she uses in her publications.

29 According to the *CIA World Factbook*, last updated: 2016-07-29, the Egyptian literacy rate in 2015 was 73.8%. In 2003 it was 57.7%, in 1995 it was 51.4%, in 1989 it was 45%. Detailed figures are not available for the first half of the twentieth century, but, according to the *Historical Atlas of the 20th Century*, Egypt's literacy rates were below 30% until the 1960s. However, there is no doubt that the Egyptian literacy rates have been rising in the last century, and they continue to do so.

and literary content of such an advanced level that places his writing far beyond the reach of a common reader in Egypt. Her remarks are certainly correct when referring to Safouan's introduction, as well as to many other of his writings, but they are not right when referring to Safouan's translation of *Othello* which is easy for everyone to understand. Madiha Doss does not acknowledge this in her article. Nor does she focus on Safouan's revolutionary motives. She focuses on the need of a rich cultural background to understand either Safouan's introduction and translation. For example, she mentions the telling 'hydra' case, that is in Act 2, iii, in Safouan's translation:

Some ideas and opinions require a specific cultural-intellectual background to be understood by a reader or a listener. Comprehension becomes impossible if this background is missing and the writer, or the translator, does not supply any explanations or additions. Thinking about the common reader, wouldn't it have been better if the translator, instead of floating between philosophical cogitations difficult to grasp even for a learned reader, had instead supplied his readers with information about Shakespeare's personality, his times, about the sources for his play, or about the historical situation around the development of the plot?

And even supposing Safouan didn't believe this was necessary, wouldn't it have been right and proper to add some comments in the margin to allow the reader to understand the elements present in the play? For example, to explain the meaning of the word hydra (a legendary animal with several heads), that is on page 73: "If I had as many mouths as the nine a hydra has, an answer like this would shut them all up". (Doss 1999, 69)

It should be noticed that her criticism here is in general about the kind of translation accomplished: Doss reproaches Safouan for choosing the trend of 'foreignization', a choice that is not directly linked to the language variety used. Safouan could have written in MSA without explaining what the hydra is. Moreover, the problem of background knowledge for a fuller comprehension does not only concern the man on the street of Egyptian nationality. How many educated Egyptians (and in general, how many people in the world) know what 'hydra' means? Only a few, but this does not prevent them from reading *Othello* or from going to the theatre, understanding it and, maybe, from inquiring into the missed meanings afterwards.

So, in Doss' opinion, the real problem is the lack of cultural background, and not so much the language variety chosen in writing.

But criticism directly concerning the use of dialect is present, and it is the core of the article. She thinks that dialect can be accepted in litera-

ture when in funny situations, otherwise it is inappropriate. There are also value judgments associated with the language varieties. It is taken for granted, necessary and unchangeable that dialect should well suit the insolent behavior of popular characters, and not others. It is a value prejudice that refers to the superior prestige of the literary language variety, as well as to the inferior prestige of the dialect:

What is to be said, therefore, about the dialect translation of the play *Othello*? [...] To what extent does the dialect suit a serious, dramatic text like Shakespeare's play, especially considering that this text does not come from the local or Egyptian tradition, but has arrived to us from geographical and cultural horizons that are very distant? When George Abyaḍ arabized the play *The Taming of the Shrew*, with the title 'al-Ġabbāra',<sup>30</sup> critics found good reasons to account for this dialect version in terms of the humour and wittiness it has. Indeed, some have even appreciated this choice because this play by Shakespeare portrays an insolent woman and the dialect style suits her behaviour well. Finally, they have appreciated it because the play deals with a character flaw that is more likely to be present in the lower classes. (Doss 1999, 70)

Therefore, Doss thinks that *Othello* was not meant to be translated into dialect. In my opinion Doss' views about the limits in Safouan's writing, and about how language matters have developed since the nineteenth century, have solid grounds and strong supporting arguments. But when it comes to dialect, her arguments become weaker. In fact, when she looks for arguments against the use of dialect, she re-cycles opinions dating back to the 1930s, when *The Taming of the Shrew* was translated into Egyptian dialect. Moreover, her criticism goes deeper when she overtly reproaches Safouan for carrying out a translation, and not an 'Arabization':

On the other hand, the play *Othello* does not have humorous or witty traits, and Moustapha Safouan made a translation, not an Arabization, namely, the dealing with the original text to balance it in the Egyptian cultural environment, as it is was customary to do with the plays previously translated into Egyptian dialect. Since Moustapha Safouan decided to translate the original text faithfully, including the environmental features just the way Shakespeare proposed them, he should also have conveyed the theatrical features, language included, with more precision, and more attention to the language levels of the characters in the play. (Doss 1999, 70)

30 *Al-ġabbāra* (The Despot) was translated into the Egyptian dialect by Bišāra Wākīm, and it was performed in November 1930, at Printania Theatre, Downtown, Cairo. For more information see 'Awaḍ 1967, 107-8.

So, translating into dialect is tolerated, as long as an 'Arabization' is aimed at an adaptation suitable to an Egyptian cultural setting. Otherwise Doss thinks it is not properly used. But Doss also criticizes Safouan because she thinks that he has not sufficiently respected the characters' social status, and in so doing she carries out a comprehensive analysis of the language employed in translation, as in the following, telling example:

Desdemona, for example, is not a common woman character whom we can imagine pronouncing some of the words in dialect that Moustapha Safouan puts on her tongue. She is the daughter of a Venetian notable, and as such she should speak in a style well-matched to her social level. How is it possible that she utters words like those she tells Jago, when she accuses him of being a liar: '/God protect us from you, you ruthless/'<sup>31</sup> (Safouan 1998, 52). Although the two words 'slander' [iftirā'] and 'slanderer' [muftarī] have a common origin, yet they are different in their stylistic and linguistic nuance. 'Slanderer' has an extra semantic nuance that is not present in 'slander'. In fact every single word and idiom have their own history, charging them with specific meanings related to them only, and no others. (Doss 1999, 70)

It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand in translation what Madiha Doss wants to say here, which is due to her mother tongue sensibility. Some explanation is necessary. The term *muftarī*, that means 'slanderer' in MSA, has developed its meaning in Egyptian dialect, becoming a very common popular insult, used either seriously or in jest, on different occasions. Its present common meaning in Egyptian dialect does not really correspond to the obsolete English term 'slanderer' but, rather, it could be better translated as 'ruthless', 'merciless', 'pitiless', 'cold-blooded', 'cutthroat'.<sup>32</sup> Doss here observes that Desdemona, a girl with a good upbringing, in Safouan's translation uses words that clash with her social status. I decided to investigate the matter and did some field research. It was carried out in the summer of 2015 and it involved a random sample of 20 English mother tongue speakers, who were asked to score the term 'slanderer' according to how offensive it sounded to them, and a random sample of 20 Egyptian dialect mother tongue speakers, who were asked to score the term *muftarī* according to how offensive it sounded to them. The English sample found

31 In Egyptian dialect the sentence sounds quite common place. For this translation of the Arabic *muftarī* see below.

32 This is the result of a small field survey carried out in the summer of 2015 in Sharm El Sheikh. A random sample of 20 Egyptian dialect mother tongue speakers were asked to explain the meaning of the term *muftarī*. *Bilā raḥma* (merciless) and *qāsī* (ruthless) were their main answers. None of them mentioned a meaning corresponding to the Shakespearean meaning of 'slanderer'.

it very difficult to answer, because the term sounded obsolete more than offensive. However, recurring to imagination, the people interviewed tried to figure out how offensive 'slanderer' would be if still in use, and the average result of their answers was 6.1 on a 1-10 scale. The average result of the Egyptian sample scoring *muftarī* was not dissimilar: 7.2 on a 1-10 scale. Moreover, both English native speakers and Egyptian native speakers declared that their score would significantly change according to the language context. If used by people they knew, and in jest, the word would not sound offensive at all.<sup>33</sup> In context, Act 2, i, on page 52 in Safouan's translation, as well as in the Shakespearian text, the word is used in a light jolly context, that has nothing tragic or dramatic, and therefore it does not sound offensive. Still, Doss does not forgive Desdemona for using a kind of language that would make of her a low class girl. Is she right? I do not think so. Desdemona is clearly joking in that context, and she does so with people who do not belong to the highest possible social class: Iago, his wife Emilia, who is not a noble woman, and Cassio, a soldier.

Moreover, although Desdemona has received a good upbringing, she is not totally controlled by it. In fact, her good manners do not prevent her from defying all possible social conventions by marrying a foreigner and a Moor, without her father's consent. So, on the whole, if sometimes she is free in her speech too, and uses popular idioms, it does not seem to me that it completely clashes with her characterization. If on the one hand Safouan's *muftarī* is not a faithful translation, on the other hand it is faithful to the context, since it belongs to a witty, lively language register that sounds appropriate and thriving in this case.

Doss insists on pointing out Safouan's lack of concern for social differences. For example, she thinks that Desdemona's father, Mr. Brabantio, in Safouan's translation is humiliated as much as his daughter. Her criticism refers to the beginning of the play, Act 1, i, when Brabantio is awakened by Iago and Roderigo's shouts, and finds out that his daughter is not in her bedroom. He rushes out into the street, half dressed. Doss states that Safouan's translation of 'night gown' by means of *gallabeyya* is not appropriate. In his stage directions Shakespeare writes as follows: "[...] Enter Brabantio, in his nightgown, with servants and torches." (Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act 1, i: 160)

Safouan translates 'nightgown' with *gallabeyya*, and Doss criticizes this choice with sound arguments:

On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine [...] her father appearing wearing a 'night *gallabeyya*' (25). It would have been better to use the

<sup>33</sup> More specifically, the 20 Egyptian dialect mother tongue speakers were also asked to score the term *muftarī* according to how offensive it sounded to them, if used in jest. The average result on a 1-10 scale was very low: only 2.9.

word 'nightgown' or 'nightdress', to remove the popular touch conveyed by *gallabeyya*, a popular meaning that is not in tune with the translation itself. (Doss 1999, 70)

The *gallabeyya* is an item of clothing traditionally used in Egypt mainly by men belonging to the lowest social classes not only to sleep in but also in their daily life. Safouan's translation here is not a 'foreignization' but, rather, a 'domestication', and it seems to me that Doss' criticism is correct.

But her criticism is, more in general, about the aptness of dialect in translating tragedy, i.e. a kind of text characterized by loftiness of contents and style. Referring to the specific functions of MSA and dialect,<sup>34</sup> she states that dialect is not the proper means to convey Shakespeare's foreign and distant world:

The use of dialect in itself leads us far from the dramatic atmosphere of the play, and its characters. [...] it will be hard to imagine the dramatic atmosphere of events that happened a long time ago [...] using dialect, i.e. the language variety used in daily communication, near in time, and that therefore will be hardly ever used to lead into Shakespeare's foreign and distant world. (Doss 1999, 70)

The argument is here quite weak. Actually Shakespeare's dramatic world, in Shakespeare's language and in Shakespeare's times, was impeccably conveyed by means of the language variety spoken in his times, a variety that was perfectly understood by an extremely heterogeneous audience: from the illiterate boors to the Royal Court. More than supporting her ideas, Doss seems to be expressing a sort of tout court aversion to dialect used in tragedy.

The article goes on to criticize those parts in Safouan's introduction where the translator expresses his reasons for choosing Shakespeare and *Othello*. Moreover, Doss reproaches Safouan for translating the play without the help of a poet, which would have been useful, since Shakespeare is history's greatest poet.<sup>35</sup>

When Doss focuses on some linguistic features of Safouan's translation, and notably on code switching, her remarks become interesting to us. Her analysis of Safouan's language shows that his Egyptian dialect is

<sup>34</sup> i.e. the codification of five levels, or functions, proposed by Badawī 1973. The linguistic levels/functions defined by Badawī refer to diastatic linguistic variation much more than to diaphasic linguistic variation.

<sup>35</sup> Her criticism is also addressed to other matters like Safouan's cryptic psychoanalytic reasons for choosing to translate *Othello*, or his choice of ignoring the symbolic sociological aspects surrounding the character of Othello. These arguments are interesting but not directly relevant to our point.

sometimes a mixture of dialect and MSA, sometimes it can be either, or both. Here follows a striking example:

فما هو المستوى الذى استخدمه مصطفى صفوان فى ترجمته؟ نراه أحيانا يمزج بعض المفردات أو العبارات الكاملة من الفصحى فى نسيج النص العامى، مثل ذلك فى الرد الذى يقدمه عطيل إلى مجموعة الأعيان الذين جاءوا ليتحققوا من صحة خبر زواجه من دسديمونة:  
 أنا أرجوكم **ترسلوا** فى طلب السيدة **وتخلوها** تتكلم عنى فى حضور والدها، فإذا تبينتم من كلامها أنى مذب، فلا تكتفوا بسحب الثقة **اللى** وضعتها **فيّه** والمنصب **اللى** وضعتونى فيه وانما اجعلوا حكمكم ينصب على حياتى نفسه (ص. 35).

What is the level Moustapha Safouan used in his translation? Sometimes we see him mix single words or entire expressions in MSA in the fabric of the vernacular text, as in Othello's answer to a group of notables who have come to investigate the truth of the news about his wedding to Desdemona: I beg you **send** the lady, and **let her** speak about me in the presence of her father, and if you find me guilty in her speech, don't simply take back the trust **that** you **placed in me**, and the position **that** you **placed me** in, but let your judgement destroy my very life (p. 35). (Doss 1999, 70)

Being an extract that mixes two language varieties, impossible to differentiate in translation, I marked in red the parts in dialect. Actually, it is remarkable here to find MSA in the text, for no evident reason. The general impression is that this specific part of the play, with its official formal-context, makes the character tune into the formal language variety, the one that would really be used in a similar official-formal context. In fact, Othello is addressing a group of notables. The Duke himself is present, and so it does not sound surprising that Othello switches to MSA when talking to high class characters.

Madiha Doss appreciates the parts where MSA contaminates the vernacular text fabric. In her article she observes that the translation would have probably been better had the extent of these expressions been wider. May the code-switching phenomenon, so frequent in diglossia-featured speaking communities, explain why sometimes the characters actually change language mode in Safouan's translation of *Othello*? Referring to Charles Ferguson's definition of diglossia, and with particular reference to the specialization of function for both the 'High' language variety and the 'Low' language variety, this may actually be a good example. So, in *Othello*, the different scene settings sometimes do account for the code-switching.

Doss notably observes that the language used by Safouan sometimes resembles the 'Third Language', while at other times it seems more to be

the so-called 'Middle Arabic'.<sup>36</sup> With regard to her understanding of 'Middle Arabic', Doss writes that it is necessary to give precise definitions, to avoid possible confusion:

This style seems to me closer to Middle Arabic than to dialect. In order to define this language variety, called Middle Arabic, first of all it is necessary to distinguish between 'Middle Arabic' and 'Third Language', a classification introduced by Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm,<sup>37</sup> and now present in the dictionary of the Arabic terms, when he wrote his play *The Deal*,<sup>38</sup> in which he devised a writing strategy that makes reading possible both in MSA and in dialect. Al-Ḥakīm undertook this experiment [...] to deal with the crisis of the Arabic theatre [...]. 'Third Language' consists in choosing words and language constructions in common between the two language levels. So, Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm wrote his play in 'Third Language', leaving readers and actors the freedom to read and perform in their favourite language mode. 'Middle Arabic' is a classification with a completely different meaning. Western Linguistics scholars coined this definition to describe anything that was and still is written in MSA mixed with structures and constructions either coming from dialect, or representing mistakes according to the criterions of correctness in MSA. (Doss 1999, 71)

Actually, Doss' clarification is necessary, interesting and appropriate.

At the end of her article, Doss summarizes why dialect is, in her opinion, useless for achieving the desired aim. Here are her conclusions:

Translating Shakespeare's *Othello* into dialect, Moustapha Safouan wanted to contribute to solving one of the main crises in our society: the language crisis and that of the gap between those who can study, read and take part in cultural life, and those who have no such opportunity. Yet the disproportion will remain, despite translating texts into dialect, because the main issue is cultural much more than linguistic. The situation will remain the same as long as Muḥammad 'Alī 'Abd al-

36 Middle Arabic is an ambiguous definition: see e.g. Larcher 2001, 578-609, and J. Lentin 2009, who defines Middle Arabic as "an intermediate, multiform variety, product of the interference of the two polar varieties on the continuum they bound, a variety that, for this very reason, has its own distinctive characteristics. Since the mixing is achieved to variable extents, one actually has to deal with a whole set of mixed varieties".

37 Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm wrote about 50 plays: comedies, tragedies, plays with a realistic, fantastic, social or political background.

38 On the main proposals about the best possible language to be used on stage, and in particular on Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm's *al-luġa al-tāliṭa*, (Third Language) and Maḥmūd Taymūr's *al-'āmmiyya al-fuṣḥā* (Polished Dialect) see Dorigo 2006, 173-91 and Taymūr s.d.

Mawlā is not so much unable to read and study as unable to understand the perspectives of the written words. Herein lies the real danger, in this lack of balance, and not only, or mainly, in reading and studying. (Doss 1999, 71)

These observations are correct too. Writing in dialect is not a magic wand that in itself can solve a much deeper cultural problem.

Yet, in my opinion Madiha Doss does not sufficiently clarify which texts she is writing about. If referred to the theoretical, historical and philosophical texts written by Safouan I am afraid that her criticism hits the mark. If referred to Safouan's translation of *Othello* into dialect, I cannot agree. In fact, the tragedy does not possess difficulties so great that it is impossible to grasp. The Egyptian dialect used in translation definitely brings the play within reach of a larger number of readers than those keen on reading similar translations in MSA. So Safouan, in view of this, has achieved his purpose.

Doss' article ends with a question: "How will the language issue find a solution?" (Doss 1999, 71). The question still remains.

## 6 Safouan's Answer to Madiha Doss: Language, Power and Politics

Madiha Doss' article provoked Safouan's reaction, which is in an article published in the magazine *Aḥbār al-Adab*, 9th January 2000. The article's title is *al-Fuṣṣḥā, taqnīn sulṭawī* (MSA Power Codification) and it is written in MSA.<sup>39</sup> Safouan's reply revolves around the core topic of the relationship between language and power. The close link between language and power is the central theme in Safouan's writings, and it is also the theme Doss most neglects in her article. So, Safouan needs to reaffirm his deep political motives, and he does this as follows:

About 'coding', I would like to draw Dr. Doss' attention to the fact that it is power that codes and discards teaching the mother tongue at school as a language with its rules and eloquence. It is power that forces the study of MSA and supports not only its superiority but also its sacredness so as to receive a fake legitimacy from it. Choosing dialect is discarding such a coding. (Safouan 2001, 133)

So, Safouan's choice to write in dialect is a political one.

<sup>39</sup> The same article is included in the collection *al-Kitāba wa-l-sulṭa* (Writing and Power) with the title *Dawr al-kātib fī-l-muḡtama'* (The role of the Writer in Society), used as the source for the following extracts.

As for *Othello* itself, starting from his introduction, Safouan explains he did not mean to dedicate it to the man on the street, nor to men of letters: “and not even to the men of culture, or the experts of reading and writing (who are many) but to the men of letters endowed with intelligence (who are very few)” (Safouan 2001, 133). Who are the men of letters endowed with intelligence? We can guess from the general context that they may be those who examine things in a critical way, without religious-conservative prejudices. So, the introduction is actually written for people who have culture, while the translation is dedicated to the common man. Nor does Safouan see any contradiction between his choice to write in dialect and his primary purpose:

So, where is the contradiction between this speech and the purpose I aim at when I write in dialect, as long as my aim is in no way to acculturate Muḥammad ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Mawlā, but, rather, to create a new sensibility in him? A sensibility [...] about how the language he speaks is endowed with a hidden but enormous potential to create new worlds? (Safouan 2001, 133)

Safouan here claims he does not mean to acculturate the man on the street, but simply to create in him a new sensibility about the potential hidden in his mother tongue. But reading Shakespeare’s works broadens culture, and so reading them in dialect, for the common man, brings both general culture and refinement of taste, through discovery of the refined expressive possibilities to be found in dialect.

As for Doss’ remark that few people will read *Othello* in dialect, Safouan agrees, but takes this opportunity to explain why he chooses to translate plays, rather than other types of writing. He knows very well that readers are only a small number of educated people, but he wants to address many people, including those who are not educated. Therefore Shakespeare’s theatre is in his opinion the best possible choice because it addresses everyone. The theatre offers more possibilities than other cultural vehicles to go beyond the borders marked by small intellectual groups, especially if it is in dialect:

As to the opinion that only learned people will read *Othello* translated into dialect or, even fewer, just a handful of them, it is correct. Without any doubt, we are still at this point. And that is exactly the reason why I have taken to translating plays, since they address the hearing (and I have the pleasure to announce, by the way, that *Othello* will

be on stage next February, in Manṣūra)<sup>40</sup> [...], yet Shakespeare's theatre, like Sophocles' does not address this audience or that, but it addresses the being entrapped in speech, at any time, in any place [...]. And this is my first and strongest reason for choosing Shakespeare. (Safouan 2001, 134-5)

So, Safouan's choice of plays and dialect is motivated by his desire to address the highest number of possible readers, by means of lively characters, who speak a lively language. He states this in his answer to Doss' *muftarī* case.

Dr. Doss also thinks that the expression "God protect us from you, you ruthless" does not become the daughter of a Venetian notable, who should rather behave more appropriately to her social standing. But Desdemona [...] is an expert chatterer, she is gifted in dialectical reasoning, she can play music, dance and sing. Therefore, I can't see why she should not talk like others would do in her place in similar situations. Why should the translation tinge her only with a celestial blue colour? (Safouan 2001, 135-6)

Desdemona is a young, lively, dynamic woman, and her language has to show that. An 'azure' idealized translation would necessarily make the character fall into line, and Safouan rejects this. But the most interesting part of Safouan's article is, in my opinion, where he writes about the choice of *Othello* restating his lack of interest in traditional readings of the tragedy, remarking his interest in the political aspects, and drawing a striking parallel with the Egyptian situation:

My choice of *Othello*, as I explained in my introduction, is merely a political one. In fact, we are a people who do not listen to the majority, but to the leader's word, the one in charge, or the religious leader, who is to the community as the head is to the body. Othello is a leader indeed and a Moor but, unlike Dr. Doss, I don't bestow any importance on this. I would do so if Shakespeare had conceived *Othello* by himself, while *Othello* is originally an Italian story, similar to other stories Shakespeare read, that gave him inspiration for a tragedy of a man who is not content with being a General, but who is smitten with the image of his leadership, and who wants to be an exemplary leader in all he says and does. Then, he comes to see the truth, i.e. that he is a murderer who kills those he loves, obsessed with his exemplary appearance, and he comes to loathe

40 It was performed in al-Manṣūra, at the *Qaṣr ʿaṣāfa al-Manṣūra*, (al-Manṣūra Culture Castle) in 2000, directed by Dr. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Ġalīl.

his very human existence with its unavoidable limits, and sacrifices his kinsmen in the name of a God who makes him blind. Hasn't Egypt been all offered as a sacrifice, by some of its leaders? Here is the heart of the matter. (Safouan 2001, 135)

The parallel with the Egyptian political situation, from Nasser onwards, is striking. Othello kills those he loves, because he is made blind by his own obsession with his leadership. His bloody methods do not differ from those Egypt has been sadly familiar with, for a long time.

At the end of his reply to Doss, it is perhaps worth noticing that Safouan cannot resist writing a farewell joke, not void of a pinch of polemic: "In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to observe that I have chosen to write these words in MSA since they address Dr. Doss and her readers" (Safouan 2001, 136).

## 7 Translation as Challenge: *Othello* and Safouan's Revolutionary Linguistic-Political Stand

Safouan's provoking ideological position has been fully appreciated only by a few intellectuals. One of them is Sameh Hanna who states that Safouan's translation is only a means intended to question long-standing language habits with reference to its consequences in terms of identity and political awareness. In Safouan's mind language becomes a revolutionary weapon. Hanna writes: "Safouan used this translation as a means of questioning the unquestionable and challenging long-standing doxas regarding language and identity". (Hanna 2009, 166). I couldn't agree more. The doxas regarding language refer to the anathema of using dialect in tragedies. The doxas regarding identity refer to the people's consciousness confronting authorities.

In Safouan's translation, Othello, a kiss up kick down type of leader, shows very few superhuman talents. Safouan's Othello is particularly weak, unreliable, confused and not suitable to be a leader. The reader sees Othello's flaws in such a clear way that he cannot but feel the need to despise and deeply reject such an unworthy authority. In Hanna's article some striking examples can be found. In Act 4, i: 34-37, Iago is trying to deceive Othello, having him believe that Desdemona has lain with Cassio. He uses the verb 'lie' that has the double meaning of 'telling lies' and 'lie down'. Othello, confused and shocked by this pun, answers showing his increasing mental confusion:

IAGO Lie-

OTHELLO With her?

IAGO With her, on her, what you will

OTHELLO Lie with her? Lie on her? We say lie on her when they belie her! Lie with her, zounds, that's fulsome! - Handkerchief! Confessions! Handkerchief!

Safouan translates as follows:

ياجو: قَبَّحٌ<sup>41</sup>  
عَطِيلٌ: عليها؟  
ياجو: عليها، معها، زي ما أنت عايز  
عَطِيلٌ: عليها، معها؟ الناس تقول قَبَّحٌ عليها لما يكون اتكلم بالباطل، قَبَّحٌ معها! ودم المسيح، دا  
شء بشع، المنديل! الإعتراقات! المنديل!  
(Safouan 1998, 112-13)

IAGO he was filthy

OTHELLO on her?

IAGO on her, with her, as you like it

OTHELLO with her? On her? People say (someone) was filthy to her when (he) had spoken untruthfully of her; filthy with her! Blood of Christ! Confessions! The Handkerchief!

(Hanna 2009, 173)

So, Safouan fully conveys the deep confusion dominating Othello's mind at that crucial moment. The verb *qabbaha*, which means 'to behave in an obscene or objectionable manner'<sup>42</sup> anticipates Othello's loss of control. Can such a mentally disordered and confused man ever be a good General? How can he commendably represent power? Does he not rather resemble the Arab dictators, against whom it is necessary to revolt? By means of a sort of identification between Othello and the Arab leaders, Safouan probably hopes to contribute to people's hatred against political authorities, and to show the need to revolt against them. He does not even hesitate to turn Othello into a common laughing stock if someone manages to cheat on him, even if it implies emphasizing the translation, as in the following example in Act 3, iii: 393, where Iago addresses Othello who insists on having damning evidence that his wife is unfaithful, and he asks him with offensive words if he would like to be the witness while his woman is being 'topped':

41 In a footnote Safouan here explains that he had to forego the pun in his translation, since it was impossible to convey in Egyptian dialect. See Safouan 1998, 112.

42 See Badawī, Hinds 1986, 682: "*qabbaha*: to behave in an obscene or objectionable manner".

IAGO ...Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on? | Behold her topped??

Safouan translates:

ياجو: ... تحب وبقك مفتوح زى الصنم، تتفرج عليها وهى بتتنطأ؟  
(Safouan 1998, 97)

IAGO ...Would you like to behold her topped gaping at her like a pagan idol?

Safouan's translation is here rougher than the original text. He adds the simile of the pagan idol, that irritates and exasperates the reader more and more. In fact a pagan idol is considered *par excellence* the symbol of superstition, falsehood, underdevelopment, backwardness, infidelity, in Egypt and, in general, in the whole world. This is exactly the idea Safouan has in mind when he thinks about the Arab leaders in general, particularly Egyptian leaders. As for the translation of 'topped', the Egyptian vernacular verb chosen is *bititnat*, a verb deriving from the Arabic root *ntt* which means 'to jump'. With this verb form, that in Egyptian dialect is a passive form, the obscene picture presenting itself to an Egyptian mother tongue results strengthened. So, Safouan's Othello is not only weak and mentally confused, but he is also the object of obscene and offensive references. He is overtly ridiculed by the translator, that does his best to make him totally unacceptable as a General, as a political leader, and also as a husband and a man. So, Safouan's revolutionary linguistic-political stand becomes clear in his translational choices as well as in his linguistic choice.

But the real question still awaiting an answer is if the Egyptian dialect can be a literary language. Has Safouan succeeded in using the Egyptian dialect in a sublime form? Is using dialect in writing instead of MSA a realistic, utopian or dystopian proposal?

## 8 Egyptian Dialect as a Poetic Weapon?

Has Safouan's Egyptian dialect touched the deepest strings and emotions of his readers? It is necessary to answer this question to prove or disprove Safouan's theory. If a linguistic revolution is a necessary stepping stone on the path to democracy, and if such a revolution is not possible unless a poetic language substitutes the cold intellectuality of MSA, either Safouan's Egyptian dialect is a poetic language or Safouan's plan is destined to fail. However, answering this question is not easy, because it deals with an aesthetic/poetic issue. The answer, which is complicated in itself, becomes even more so considering that my opinion is not that of an Egyptian native speaker's. Can a foreign reader give a reasonable opinion

about an aesthetic/poetic/linguistic topic concerning a language that is not their own? Without a doubt, this reader is at a disadvantage. Yet, on the other hand, this reader may have some advantages too. Being a foreigner puts this reader in an unbiased position when facing the different Arab language varieties. Unencumbered by the social/religious conditionings that influence many Egyptian citizens, a foreign reader will probably either read in MSA or in dialect without preconceived judgements about prestige attached to the language in the text.

My attempt to answer is necessarily the outcome of my personal reading experience that at first was an individual reading, followed by a group reading carried out with two Arabic language professors, both Egyptian dialect mother tongue speakers.<sup>43</sup> This was in the summer of 2014. One of the purposes of my reading was to check if Safouan had succeeded in demonstrating that the Egyptian dialect is able to convey in a sublime way the greatest poet God ever created: William Shakespeare. In fact, Safouan's aim was to show that the Egyptian dialect can be a poetic language just as Italian was for Dante. When I read Safouan's translation of *Othello* with the two Egyptian Arabic teachers in Cairo, they initially showed some slight resistance,<sup>44</sup> which was soon overcome. Some of the parts translated, which are sublime in Shakespeare's original text too, have particularly fascinated mother tongue informants. Here follow some examples. In Act 2, i: 67-73, set in Cyprus, Cassio has already arrived, and he is waiting for Othello. He is a bit worried because a terrible storm has separated his ship from the General's. Unexpectedly Iago arrives and Desdemona is on board with him. Cassio comments on her arrival with very lyrical words:

43 They both have an Arabic Language University degree, obtained at Cairo University, and they both work as Arabic teachers in secondary schools in Cairo.

44 They did not understand my interest in the translations in dialect, and they tried to convince me to read only those in MSA. They thought the translations into MSA would probably be better, simply because they were written in MSA. Their confusion increased when I asked them to read the translations in MSA too, because they could not understand whether I was more interested in dialect or in MSA. With some difficulty I had to explain that, to my foreign ear, both MSA and the Egyptian dialect sound equally beautiful, and that I do not perceive either of them to be better or superior. The text was new for them. They did not even know the storyline. While reading, they became deeply involved with it. One of them was so involved that, reading out loud in dialect, he instinctively started reciting. Moreover, he refused to read the female parts, but also Iago's part, that deeply disgusted him. So, I had to read the female roles, and also Iago's.

CASSIO

He's had most favourable and happy speed:  
 Tempests themselves, high seas, and howling winds,  
 The guttered rocks and congregated sands,  
 Traitors encarp'd to clog the guiltless keel,  
 Having some sense of beauty, do omit  
 Their mortal natures, letting go safely by  
 The divine Desdemona.

كاسيو: السحر أمّن له الطريق،  
 العواصف نفسها، البحور العاليه، والرياح النابحة،  
 الصخور المتساقطة والرمال المتراكمة،  
 كل المكامن الخائنه الراقده تحت الميه عشان تعقل بطن السفينه،  
 كلها نسيت طبايعها المميته  
 كأنما حسست بالجمال، عشان تسيب  
 دسدموئه الإلاهيه تمر بسلام.  
 (Safouan 1998, 50)

I marked in red the Egyptian dialect parts, while the rest of the extract, can be either read in MSA or in dialect, as in the 'Third Language'. The mix of the two varieties here is a good example of translation in the variety called Middle or Mixed Arabic.<sup>45</sup> I then examined the rhyming sound *ā*, marked in blue. This rhyme is repeated in the extract 15 times, and it gives the language a very pleasant, musical quality. The rhythm in the extract is regular. It is built up by means of several subjects contributing to create a climax and to increase the reader's suspense until the verb finally satisfies one's expectation with its sublime meaning.

Of course the English text too presents recurring sounds and internal rhymes. Here again, I marked in blue the *s* sounds that recur 15 times. So, rhythm, climax and originality fill the text here. The musical quality of the extract is superb, both in English and in translation. In fact at this point both the Egyptian readers reacted by stopping and repeatedly exclaiming: "Allah! Allah! Allah!". It is not a prayer but rather a spontaneous cry of wonder, used in Egypt to express appreciation for something. So, at this point of his translation Safouan has succeeded in deeply touching the sensibility of the mother tongue reader, hitting the mark, i.e. the purpose aimed at.

Another telling example of the successful use of dialect is at the end of Act 4, iii: 85-102, where Emilia utters her speech about equality between husband and wife:

45 As stated above, the term 'Middle Arabic' in itself is ambiguous, because it can have different definitions. Here it is used according to Lentin's definition.

EMILIA [...]

But I do think it is **their** husbands' faults  
 If wives do fall. Say that they slack **their** duties,  
 And pour our treasures into foreign laps;  
 Or **else** break out with peevish jealousies,  
 Throwing restraint upon us; or say **they** strike us,  
 Or scant our former **having** in despite -  
 Why, **we have** galls, and though **we have some** grace,  
 Yet **have we some** revenge. Let husbands know  
**Their** wives **have** sense like them: they see and smell,  
 And **have their** palates both for sweet and sour  
 As husbands **have**. What is it that **they** do,  
 When **they** change us for others? Is it sport?  
**I think** it is. And **doth** affection breed it?  
**I think** it **doth**. Is't frailty that thus errs?  
 It is so too. And **have we** not affections,  
 Desires for sport, and frailty, as men **have**?  
 Then **let them** use us well: else **let them** know  
 The **ills** we do, **their ills** instruct us so.

As marked in different colours, the extract is rich in consonances, repetitions and rhymes. These features provide the language with such musicality and such a pleasant quality that, along with the images conveyed, they grant the reader the intellectual enjoyment Shakespeare is justly famous for.

Here is Safouan's translation:

إميليا: ... لكن أنا اعتقادي إنَّ الغلطة غلطة الرجال،  
 إذا كانت نسوانهم بتقع في المنكر، افرض إنهم أهملوا واجباتهم  
 وراحوا يرموا الحب اللي من حقنا في حجر غير حجرنا،  
 أو من غير كده ولا كدا يقرفونا بغيرتهم  
 ويحاسبونا على الخرجة والطلعة، أو افرضي إنهم يضربونا  
 أو يقللوا المصروف انتقام ليه،  
 ما احنا كمان عندنا الصفر، وإذا كان عندنا لطف  
 فبجدنا كمان غل، خلى الأزواج تعرف  
 إن زوجاتهم زيها زيهم، بتشوف وتشم،  
 عندهم حلق يدوق الحلوة والمرّة  
 زي اللي عندهم، آيه اللي بيعملوه  
 لما يبجروا ورا غيرنا؟ رياضة؟  
 أفكر كدا، هل الميل هو السبب؟  
 أفكر أيوه. هل ضعف وبيتوهم عن الطريق؟  
 دا كمان أيوه. طيب هل احنا ما عندناش ميل؟  
 غية رياضة وضعف زي اللي عند الرجال؟  
 إذن خليهم يعاملونا كويس، وإلا خليهم يعرفوا  
 أذانا ليهم اتعلمناه من أذناهم لينا.  
 (Safouan 1998, 139-40)

Safouan translates this part fully and faithfully, using mainly dialect syntax and words. As for the rhythm, repetitions and internal rhymes, they are as present in this translation as in the original text. The different colours mark them. Safouan's great effort to convey the original text in its details and musicality is evident here, and the result is magnificent. To achieve it, Safouan used the very same writing techniques used by Shakespeare.

In conclusion, I report another extract where Iago is speaking, giving his masterly definition of a deserving woman. It is in Act 2, i: 145-54:

IAGO She that was ever fair and never proud,  
 Had a tongue at will, and yet was never loud;  
 Never lacked gold, and yet went never gay;  
 Fled from her wish, and yet said "Now I may";  
 She that being angered, her revenge being neigh,  
 Bade her wrong stay, and her displeasure fly;  
 She that in wisdom never was so frail  
 To change the cod's head for salmon's tail;  
 She that could think and never disclose her mind:  
 See suitors following and not look behind

Here is Safouan's translation:

ياجو: الجميله دايمًا وعمرها ما اتغرت،  
 اللي لسانها ملكها، ومع كده عمره ما على،  
 اللي ذهبها كتير لكن عمرها ما اتبهرت  
 اللي احجمت عن رغبتها ساعة ما قالت "ممکن دالوقت"،  
 اللي لما غضبت، وكان انتقامها في إيدها،  
 مسكت نفسها وصرفت زعلها،  
 اللي عقلها عمره ما نقص  
 لدرجة أنها تبدل الكويس بالوحش،  
 اللي تعرف تفكر لكن عمرها ما تبوح بسرها،  
 اللي المعجبين يبقوا وراها  
 لكن عمرها ما تدور وشها.  
 (Safouan 1998, 53)

Only in line 152, the fourth from the end in the extract translated, does Safouan simplify the line generically mentioning "good" and "bad", instead of reporting the metaphor of "the cod's head for salmon's tail". Doing so he makes the line poorer but on the whole his translation is faithful and sublime. The different colours mark repetitions and rhymes, that are as numerous, pleasant, and musical as in the original text. In fact, here like

elsewhere, both mother tongue readers reacted<sup>46</sup> by crying out: "Allah! Allah! Allah!" to express their profound intellectual and aesthetic enjoyment.<sup>47</sup> On reading the text in MSA they did not have the same enthusiastic reaction.

So, the Egyptian dialect used here is indeed sublime. It does not show it possesses any such intrinsic limit as to prevent the translator from trying to convey Shakespeare's rich language nor does it show it has any specific limits superior or inferior to those of other languages, including MSA. Therefore it may actually become a poetic weapon in the hands of the people able to boost a process leading to a linguistic-political revolution.

## 9 Concluding Remarks

The aim of this article was to investigate how language can be a proxy for social and political issues. In Safouan's view only by abolishing MSA in writing, and taking up the Egyptian dialect in its place, can a slow process leading to democracy be started. As long as the written language is in the hands of power, as long as the gap between élite and people remains, the élite will use it to keep and defend their prestigious position to the detriment of the people.

However, in order to take up the Egyptian dialect in writing, it needs to become a poetic language. Safouan's translation of *Othello* aims at showing that if the Egyptian dialect can worthily convey Shakespeare's poetic world, it can also be considered a poetic language worth being taken up in writing.

The analysis of Safouan's translation of *Othello* shows that the sublime can be achieved in Egyptian dialect. Yet, the feedback to Safouan's *Othello* has been very poor. In fact, there has been hardly any feedback. Apart from Madiha Doss' and Sameh Hanna's articles, little or nothing relevant has been written on the topic. Nor has *Othello*'s performance been kissed by fortune. Safouan's *Othello* was only performed in al-Manşūra, at the *Qaṣr ṭaqāfa al-Manşūra*, (al-Manşūra Culture Castle) in 2000, directed by Dr. Ahmed 'Abd al-Galīl. More than the language used on stage, it seems that the music was appreciated. In fact, the Ministry of Culture awarded the play the First Prize for music, while no records concerning any debate about the language used on stage can easily be found. So, indifference was the dominating feedback to Safouan's *Othello*.

Does this mean that Safouan's translation is esthetically worthless? I do not think so. *Nemo propheta in patria*. The text analysis I carried out shows

46 Considering the cultural background of my informants and their initial opposition to reading *Othello* in the Egyptian dialect, I find their reaction significant.

47 This extract definitively put an end to any resistance the Egyptian professors had against reading in dialect. In this vernacular version, one of them unexpectedly dedicated the extract to his wife. She was very pleased and grateful, but it did not even cross her mind to ask why it was in dialect and not in Modern Standard Arabic!

that Safouan's translation is in some places superb. Moreover, Egyptian dialect mother tongue speakers were repeatedly sent into raptures while reading Safouan's *Othello*, which definitely proves that the Egyptian dialect can be a poetic language.

Will Safouan's revolutionary proposal become reality one day? Will dialects substitute MSA in writing in a futuristic democratic Arab world? Is it only a utopian dream? At the moment it seems to be indeed. Only time will really answer this question.

## Bibliography

- 'Aṭīyya, 'Omar (1967). *Luġāt al-masrah al-'Arabī* (The Languages of the Egyptian Theatre). Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Kaṭūlikiyya.
- 'Awaḍ, Ramsīs (1967). *Shakespeare fī Miṣr* (Shakespeare in Egypt). Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma li-l-Kitāb.
- Badawī, al-Sa'īd (1973). *Mustawayāt al-'Arabiyya-al-mu'āṣira fī Miṣr* (Levels of Contemporary Arabic in Egypt). Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif.
- Badawī, al-Sa'īd; Hinds, Martin [1986] (2009). *A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic. Arabic-English*. Beirut: Librairie du Liban.
- Behnstedtd, P.; Woidich, M. (2005). *Arabische Dialektographie. Eine Einführung*. Leiden; Boston: Brill.
- Booth, Marilyn (1998a). s.v. "Ḥaddād, Fu'ād". Scott Meisami, Julie; Starkey, Paul, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 1. London; New York: Routledge, 259-60.
- Booth, Marilyn (1998b). s.v. "Jāhīn Ṣalāḥ". Scott Meisami, Julie; Starkey, Paul, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 1. London; New York: Routledge, 407.
- Botterill, Stephen (transl.) (1996). *Dante Alighieri: De Vulgari Eloquentia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boullata, Issa J. (1998). s.v. "Jabrā, Jabrā Ibrāhīm". Scott Meisami, Julie; Starkey, Paul, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 1. London; New York: Routledge, 405.
- Cachia, Pierre (1990). *An Overview of Modern Arabic Literature*. Edimburgh: Edimburgh University Press.
- CIA, Central Intelligence Agency (2016). *The World Factbook* [online]. URL <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (2016-08-08).
- Donner, Fred (1993). "Al-lahaġāt al-'Arabīyya wa ahammiyyat dirāsatiḥā" (Arabic Dialects and the Importance of Studying Them). *Al-Abḥāt*, 41, 3-26.
- Dorigo, Rossella (2006). "Riflessioni sull'uso dell'Arabo parlato nella letteratura teatrale egiziana del primo Novecento". *Annali di Ca' Foscari*, 45(2), 173-91.

- Doss, Madiha (1999). "Šaksbīr bi-l-luġa-al-‘āmmiyya man yaqra’uhu?" (Shakespeare in Dialect, Who Reads Him?). *Wiġhāt nazar*, October, 68-71.
- Durand, Olivier (2009). *Dialettologia Araba. Introduzione*. Roma: Carocci.
- Franklin, D. (transl.) (2000). *Euripides: The Bacchae*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ferguson, Charles (1959). "Diglossia". *Word*, 15, 325-40.
- Foucault, Michel (2001). *L'herméneutique du sujet: cours au Collège de France, 1981-1982*. Éd. par François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, Frédéric Gros. Paris: Gallimard, Editions du Seuil.
- Foucault, Michel (2014). *Wrong Doing-Truth Telling, the Function of Avowal in Justice*. Transl. by S.W. Sawyer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ghazoul, Ferial J. (1998). "The Arabization of Othello". *Comparative Literature*, 50(1), 1-31.
- al-Ḥakīm, Tawfīq (1956). *Al-Šafqa* (The Deal). Cairo: Maktabat-al-Adab.
- al-Ḥakīm, Tawfīq (1966). *Al-Warṭa* (The Dilemma). Cairo: Maṭba‘a al-Namūdaġiyya.
- Hanna, Sameh F. (2005). "Othello in Egypt, Translation and the (Un)making of National Identity". House, J.; Ruano, R.M.; Baumgarten, N. (eds.), *Translation and the Construction of Identity*. Seoul: IATIS, 109-28.
- Hanna, Sameh F. (2009). "Othello in the Egyptian Vernacular, Negotiating the 'Doxic' in Drama Translation and Identity Formation". *The Translator*, 15, 157-78.
- Larcher, Pierre (2001). "Moyen Arabe et Arabe Moyen". *Arabica* 48(4), 578-609.
- Lentin, Jérôme (2009). s.v. "Middle Arabic" [online]. Edzard, Luz; De Jong, Rudolf (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*. Managing Editors Online Edition: Brill Online 2015. URL [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-arabic-language-and-linguistics/middle-arabic-EALL\\_COM\\_vol3\\_0213](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-arabic-language-and-linguistics/middle-arabic-EALL_COM_vol3_0213) (2015-09-01)
- Maḥfūz, Naġīb (1981). *Layālī alf Layla* (Nights of One Thousand Nights). Cairo: al-Faġāla, Maktabat-Miṣr.
- Mahfouz, Nagib (1995). *Arabian Nights and Days*. Transl. by Denys Johnson-Davies. Cairo: AUC Press.
- Nasser, Ahmed Ismail (2010). "Osservazioni sul teatro dialettale in Egitto". *AnnalSS* 7, 355-67.
- Sadgrove, P. (1998). s.v. "Šanū', Ya'qūb". Scott Meisami, Julie; Starkey, Paul, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 2. London; New York: Routledge, 668.
- Safouan, Moustapha (2001a). *Al-Kitāba wa-l-sulṭa* (Writing and Power). Cairo: Manšūrāt Ġam'iyyat 'Ilm al-Nafs al-Iklīnikī.
- Safouan, Moustapha (2001b). "Dawr al-kātib fī-l-muġtama'" (The Role of the Writer in Society). Safouan, Moustapha (2001), *Al-Kitāba wa-l-sulṭa* (Writing and Power). Cairo: Manšūrāt Ġam'iyyat 'Ilm al-Nafs al-Iklīnikī, 115-31.

- Safouan, Moustapha (2007). *Why are the Arabs not Free? - The Politics of Writing*. Transl. by Colin Mac Cabe. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Limited.
- Safouan, Moustapha (2012). *Limādā al-'Arab laysū aḥrār<sup>an</sup>?* (Why are the Arabs not free?). Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī.
- Somekh, Sasson (1991). *Genre and Language in Modern Arabic Literature*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 37-45.
- Somekh, Sasson (1998). s.v. "Translation, modern". Scott Meisami, Julie; Starkey, Paul, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 2. London; New York: Routledge, 777-8.
- Starkey, Paul (1998). s.v. "al-Ḥakīm, Tawfīq". Scott Meisami, Julie; Starkey, Paul, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 1. London; New York: Routledge, 263-5.
- Suleiman, Yasir (2013). "Arabic Folk Linguistics: Between Mother Tongue and Native Language". Owen, Jonathan (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Arabic Linguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 239-50.
- Taymūr, Maḥmūd (s.d.). *Dirāsāt fī al-qīṣṣa wa-al-masrah* (Studies about Short Stories and the Theatre). Cairo: Maṭba'a al-Namūdaḡiyya.
- Venuti, Lawrence (1995). *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London: Routledge.
- Von Humboldt, Wilhelm (1836). *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues: und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts* [online] URL <https://archive.org/stream/berdieverschied00humbgoog#page/n9/mode/2up>.
- Von Humboldt, Wilhelm (1988). *The Heterogeneity of Language and its Influence on the Intellectual Development of Mankind*. Transl. by P. Heath. Cambridge: CUP.
- White, Matthew (1997). *Historical Atlas of the 20th Century* [online]. URL <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/20centry.htm#Sources> (2016-08-08).

Works of William Shakespeare  
(in alphabetical order)

- Ma'sāt 'Uṭayl* (The Tragedy of Othello) [2004] (2009). Arabic transl. by Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Badawī. Cairo: al-Markaz al-Qawmī li-l-Tarḡama.
- "Masraḡiyyat-'Uṭayl" (The Play of Othello) (1984). Egyptian dialect transl. by Nu'mān 'Āšūr. *Al-Masrah* (The Theatre) 3, 89-128.
- Masraḡiyyat 'Uṭayl* (The Play of Othello) (1998). Egyptian dialect transl. by Moustapha Safouan. Cairo: Anglo Egyptian Library.
- Otello* (2013). Italian transl. by Agostino Lombardo. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Othello* (2001). London: Cedric Watts Edition, Wordsworth Classics.

- “Uṭayl” (Othello) (1978). Arabic transl. by Ğabrā Ibrāhīm Ğabrā. Shakespeare, William *al-Ma’āsī al-kubrā* (The Great Tragedies). Beirut: al-Mu’assasa al-‘Arabiyya li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Našr, 2000: 459-603.
- ‘Uṭayl (Othello) (1912). Arabic transl. by Ḥalīl Muṭrān. Cairo: Matba’a al-Ma’ārif. Re-printed by Dār Mārūn, Beirut: eight print, 1974. URL <http://www.alsakher.com>.
- ‘Uṭayl (Othello) (2005). Arabic transl. by Muḥammad Muḥammad ‘Inānī. Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li-l-Kitāb.