

TRANSLATING METONYMY IN THE HOLY QUR'AN:  
SURAT AN-NISA AS A CASE STUDY

by

Alaa Gamal Abdelhakim Muhammad

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## Approval Signatures

We, the undersigned, approve the Master's Thesis of Alaa Gamal Abdelhakim Muhammad

Thesis Title: Translating Metonymy in the Holy Qur'an: Surat an-Nisa as a Case Study

**Signature**

**Date of Signature**

(dd/mm/yyyy)

---

Dr Usman Ghani  
Assistant Professor in Arabic and Translation Studies

Thesis Advisor

---

Dr Said Faiq  
Professor in Arabic and Translation Studies  
Thesis Committee Member

---

Dr Sattar Izwaini  
Associate Professor in Arabic and Translation Studies  
Thesis Committee Member

---

Dr David Wilmsen  
Department Head

---

Dr. James Griffin  
CAS Graduate Programs Director

---

Dr. Mahmoud Anabtawi  
Dean of College of Arts & Sciences

---

Dr. Khaled Assaleh  
Interim Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies

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## **Dedication**

To my parents.

To my wife and children.

## Abstract

This thesis, as its title suggests, is mainly concerned with exploring the linguistically beautiful and rhetorically instrumental role played by metonymy throughout the Holy Qur'an, with special emphasis on Surat an-Nisa, the fourth surah (chapter) of the Holy Qur'an. This particular surah has been chosen due to its strikingly impressive metonymic examples and rich dialogues about women, orphans, inheritance, marriage laws, and even tayammum (using the earth for the performance of ablution when water resources are not obtainable), etc. This thesis also attempts to emphasize the distinctive character of metonymy as a fully independent figure of speech and explore how different strategies are utilized in the selected translations to overcome linguistic obstacles when translating metonymic expressions from Arabic into English. Four examples from the Holy Qur'an in general, and nine examples from Surat an-Nisa in particular, will be selected based on their exceptionally clear metonymic usages. Their general meanings will be introduced using some leading Books of Tafseer (Exegesis/Commentaries), including those of al-Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir, and Tantawy, among other Arabic and Islamic resources. Furthermore, two well-known English translations authored by notable translators from different ideological, educational, and cultural backgrounds will be compared and evaluated in terms of equivalence, translation strategies used, and contexts. These two translations are *The Koran Interpreted* by the British orientalist Arthur John Arberry (1955) and *The Noble Qur'an* by Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan (1997). The key focus will be on investigating how metonymic expressions are communicated to English readers and reflected linguistically in the translation. Results of the thesis outline how the Holy Qur'an employed the figurative power of metonymic language to convey specific messages and address certain topics by using expressions that give both common literal meanings and nonliteral allegorical meanings.

**Search Terms:** Language of the Holy Qur'an, Surat an-Nisa, Metonymy, Kinayah, Arabic, Translation, Figures of speech.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

SL- Source Language

ST- Source Text

TL- Target Language

TT- Target Text

## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

“Figurative language is of great value. It adds clearness to our speech; it gives it more force; or it imparts to literature beauty.”

(Webster, 1900, p. 258)

Despite the growing interest in studying the vital role of figurative language, played by various figures of speech, in expressing the beautiful pragmatics of the Holy Qur'an, little research (in English) has examined the remarkable role of metonymy in the Qur'an in general and in Surat an-Nisa in particular. Undoubtedly, this kind of special language poses enormous challenges for translators due to the frequently close connection and overlap between connotative and denotative meanings. Naturally, it requires translators to exert considerable efforts, enhance their linguistic skills, and enrich their Arabic language knowledge so they can understand different symbolic and allegorical meanings conveyed by the pragmatics of the Holy Qur'an.

Metonymy is one of the most beautiful, interesting, and widely used figures of speech. In his book *The Poetics of Mind*, Gibbs (1994) pays special attention to this point and distinctly states: “The fact that people easily use and understand metonymic expressions attests to the automatic, effortless, and unconscious way that people structure their experiences in terms of metonymic relations” (p. 13).

Historically speaking, many scholars disregarded the independent role of metonymy as a key figure of speech and retained its subordinated status. For example, according to Panther and Radden (1999), “one of the most meticulous thinkers of antiquity, Aristotle, did not recognize the distinctive character of metonymy and reduced it to a subtype of metaphor” (p. 1). Some researchers still stick to this assumption. Nerlich and Clarke (2001) highlight this fact and draw our attention to it in a research paper about serial metonymy, arguing that “the old substitution view of metonymy

continues to shine through the cognitive analysis of metaphor when certain patterns of metonymy, such as container for contents are evoked” (p. 246).

The same idea is partly shared by some Arabic language scholars, including Diya al-Din Ibn al-Athir ضياء الدين ابن الأثير (558-637 A.H./1163-1239 C.E.), a leading prose-writer and Arabic language intellectual. Tabanah (1988) says that Ibn al-Athir had posited in his famous literary work *al-Mathal al-Thaer المثل الثائر*<sup>1</sup> that “metonymy is, in fact, a part of metaphor” (p. 549).

However, some modern scholars disagree and offer a different point of view. For example, in his book *The Philosophy of Style*, Herbert Spencer (1883), clearly states that “the occasional increase of force produced by metonymy may be similarly accounted for” (p. iv). Nerlich and Clarke (2001) strongly argue that “in recent years metonymy has come to be recognized as a fundamental cognitive and linguistic phenomenon alongside metaphor” (p. 1). Gibbs goes further in asserting the linguistic role of metonymy by maintaining that “literary texts rely extensively on metonymy as a source of realism, exactness, and detail” (1994, p. 11).

Later in this thesis, various research and scholarly opinions on metonymy will be discussed in detail. The research will demonstrate, with interesting examples, that metonymy is not only an independent figure of speech but also a leading force in the world of figurative language and beautiful expressions.

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<sup>1</sup> The full title of the book in Arabic is 'المثل الثائر في أدب الكاتب والشاعر' translated into English as 'The Present Understanding of the Art of the Scribe and the Poet' by the Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy (edited by Oliver Leaman, 2010, p. 171).

Gelder (1982, p. 146) believes that Diya al-Din Ibn al-Athir “probably wrote this book ca. 608/1211”.

## **1.2 Main Purpose of the Study**

Building on the fact that little attention has been devoted to studying the translation of metonymic expressions in the Holy Qur'an, the objectives of this thesis are twofold. The first objective involves selecting and examining two renowned Qur'an English translations, authored by translators from different backgrounds, to highlight how the language of the Holy Quran is understood from a Western non-Muslim prospective compared to Muslim/Arabic understandings in addition to identifying key translation strategies used when rendering metonymic expressions in the Holy Qur'an.

The second objective will attempt to find reasonable answers to the following questions:

1. Why metonymy is important in conveying Qur'anic messages effectively?
2. Did the selected English translations succeed in reflecting the intended meaning of ayahs (verses) rich in metonymy?

## **1.3 Thesis Structure**

This thesis comprises eight chapters. The first chapter establishes the hypothesis and outlines the structure of the thesis. Chapter two discusses some leading translation theories in a brief literature review. The third chapter focuses on the importance of the Holy Qur'an to Muslims and explores some Qur'anic translation difficulties, especially the question of untranslatability. Chapter four introduces definitions of metonymy, similarity with other figures of speech (synecdoche and metaphor in particular) and its forms in English and Arabic with examples.

In the fifth chapter, the research and data collection methodology will be introduced along with a brief background about the two selected English translations. Chapter six discusses the uniqueness of Qur'anic language and provides an assessment for four illustrative metonymic examples from the Holy Qur'an. The seventh chapter is dedicated to metonymy in Surat an-Nisa. It provides a brief background about this Surah and analyzes nine of its outstanding metonymic expressions. The final chapter is the conclusion, which will highlight some of the key points this thesis has addressed.

## Chapter Two: Review of Relevant Issues in Translation Studies

This chapter discusses the theoretical portion of the thesis and highlights some important translation theories and approaches. Due to the limited research literature on the translation of metonymy in the Holy Qur'an, language theories and translation concepts discussed in this chapter will mainly be used as a general knowledge base and theoretical guide throughout the thesis.

### 2.1 Overview

In his book *Contexts in Translating*, the eminent linguist and Baptist minister Eugene A. Nida (2001) notes that “philology, the study of evaluation of written texts, including their authenticity, form, meaning, and culture influence, has for more than 2000 years been the primary basis for discussing translation theories and practice” (p. 109).

Nida (2001) maintains that the two oldest formulas of translation methods are literal vs. free translation, outlining that:

In the Classical Roman world Cicero, Horace, Catullus, and Quintilian discussed primarily the issues of literal vs. free translating... Roman writers opted for freedom in translating, but the practice of translating and concern for principles of effective interlingual communication largely died out during the early Middle Ages. (p. 109)

However, with the arrival of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, translation and linguistic studies entered a new era with the considerable efforts of many linguists and literary theorists who pursued diverse theorization approaches and methodologies, including what is called Russian structuralists, American anthropological linguists, and others. Nida (2001) highlights this profound move in his book and states that the focus “... shifted from formal features of particular literary texts to the role of language as a code, a system for communication, and an integral part of culture” (p. 110).

In 1972, the Dutch poet and linguist James Stratton Holmes was the first one to coin the name *Translation Studies* in his paper “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies.” Hatim and Munday (2004) note that “This burgeoning field [translation]

received the name 'Translation Studies' thanks to the Netherlands-based scholar James S. Holmes in 1972,” outlining that "Holmes uses 'translating' for the process and 'translation' for the product” (p. 7).

Building on the abovementioned brief background, some key theoretical models, including linguistic, functional, and discourse analysis approaches to translation will be briefly discussed below.

## **2.2 Roman Jakobson: Linguistic Meaning and Equivalence**

The renowned Russian–American linguist and literary theorist Roman Jakobson was a leader in linguistic structural analysis. His contributions to translation studies in the theoretical analysis of translation are extensively studied in translation and linguistic research communities. In 1959, Roman Jakobson wrote an important essay titled “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation.” In this essay, he outlined that the meaning lies mainly with the signifier and proposed three types of translation:

- a) Intralingual (within the same language).
- b) Interlingual (between two languages).
- c) Intersemiotic (between sign systems).

Jakobson’s study was centered mainly on the equivalence in meaning. According to him, equivalence in the message of the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) may not be achieved using identical code-units since both texts belong to two different sign systems with different signified concepts (cited in Munday, 2008, p. 38).

According to Munday (2008), Jakobson links the problem of meaning and equivalence to the focus on “differences in the structure and terminology of language rather than on any inability of one language to render a message” (p. 38).

### **2.3 Juliane House: Overt and Covert Translations**

In her book *Translation Quality Assessment*, the German linguist and theorist Juliane House (1997) based her model on comparative ST-TT analysis, describing the more target-audience oriented notion of translation as “fundamentally misguided” (Munday, 2008, pp. 91–92).

Furthermore, she proposed a more resourceful approach: the concept of overt and covert translations. In the *overt* translation, the translation is more closely related to the source culture, such as translations of political speeches. On the other hand, *covert* translation is a functional translation that is viewed as an equivalent to the ST and seems to be natural in the target language (TL), such as advertisements and journalism articles.

In her opinion, House (1997) believes that some texts hold “independent status” in the source culture. For their translation, she recommends that the receptor should be “overtly” introduced to the ST and there should be no attempt to produce a “second original.” Covert translation, on the other hand, “enjoys the status of an original source text in the target culture” (p. 69).

### **2.4 Nida and Taber: Formal Correspondence and Dynamic Equivalence**

Nida and Taber (1982) developed the important concept of Formal Correspondence and Dynamic Equivalence. They refer to Formal Correspondence as the “quality of a translation in which the features of the form of the source text have been mechanically reproduced in the receptor language” (p. 201). In Dynamic Equivalence, “the form is structured (different syntax and lexicon) to preserve the same meaning” (p. 173). To date, their work has had a considerable impact on analyzing and understanding different kinds of translated texts. Their categorization is usually referred to as word-for-word translation (Formal Correspondence) and sense-for-sense translation (Dynamic Equivalence).



## 2.5 Newmark: Methods of Translation

In his two books *Approaches to Translation* (1981) and *A Textbook of Translation* (1988), Peter Newmark departed from Nida's receptor-oriented line and provided practical examples of linguistic theories. He argued that the success of equivalent effect is 'illusory' and that "the conflict of loyalties, the gap between emphasis on source and target language will always remain as the overriding problem in translation theory and practice" (Newmark, 1981, p. 38). To narrow this gap, Newmark proposed two new terms of translation equivalence: semantic and communicative.

Newmark (1988) believes that "the central problem of translating has always been whether to translate literally or freely. The argument has been going on since at least the first century BC Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century (p. 45)." Newmark discussed several translation methods and argued that if the emphasis is on the SL, the rendition method will come in the form of "word-for-word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, or semantic translation (1988, p. 45)". If the emphasis is on the TL, the rendition method will come in the form of "adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation or communicative translation (1988, p. 45)."

Newmark (1988, pp. 45-47), defined the aforementioned methods of translation as follows:

- (a) **Word-for-word translation:** The SL word-order is preserved and the words translated singly by their most common meanings, out of context. Cultural words are translated literally.
- (b) **Literal translation:** The SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context.
- (c) **Faithful translation:** A faithful Translation attempts to reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the TL grammatical structures... it attempts to be completely faithful to the intentions and the text-realization of the SL writer.

- (d) Semantic translation: Semantic translation differs from 'faithful translation' only in as far as it must take more account of the aesthetic value (that is, the beautiful and natural sounds of the SL text, compromising on 'meaning' where appropriate so that no assonance, word-play or repetition jars in the finished version. Further, it may translate less important cultural words by culturally neutral third or functional terms but not by cultural equivalents.
- (e) Adaptation: This is the 'freest' form of translation. It is used mainly for plays (comedies and poetry); the themes, characters, plots are usually preserved, the SL culture converted to the TL culture and the text rewritten.
- (f) Free translation: Free translation reproduces the matter without the manner, or the content without the form of the original. Usually it is a paraphrase much longer than the original.
- (g) Idiomatic translation: Idiomatic translation reproduces the 'message' of the original but tends to distort nuances of meaning by preferring colloquialisms and idioms where these do not exist in the original.
- (h) Communicative translation: Communicative translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership.

## **2.6 Mona Baker: Different Levels of Equivalence**

Mona Baker (1992) discussed the concept of equivalence in a more detailed approach, outlining how the concept of equivalence should be defined and investigated at different levels, including cohesion, pragmatic equivalence, grammatical equivalence, and textual equivalence. For Baker (1992), the use of the concept of equivalence is meant for:

The sake of convenience—because most translators are used to it rather than because it has any theoretical status. It is used here with the proviso that although equivalence can usually be obtained to some extent, it is influenced by a variety of linguistic and cultural factors and is therefore always relative. (pp. 5-6)

She also explored some problems of non-equivalence, including culture-specific concepts, differences in physical or interpersonal perspectives, differences in expressive

meaning, differences in form, and the use of loan words in the ST (Baker, 1992). Baker discussed common translation strategies used by professional translators to deal with the aforementioned problems, including translation by a more general word (superordinate), translation by a more neutral/less expressive word, translation by cultural substitution, translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation, translation by paraphrase using a related word, and more (Baker, 1992).

In her judgment, Baker (1992) believes that achieving coherence of texts depends on readers' knowledge, arguing that "the coherence of a text is a result of the interaction between knowledge presented in the text and the reader's own knowledge and experience of the world..." (p. 219). She further explains her point of view by stating that:

We could perhaps say that texts are neither coherent nor incoherent by themselves, that whether a text coheres or not depends on the ability of the reader to make sense of it by relating it to what s/he already knows or to a familiar world, whether this world is real or fictional. A text which coheres for one reader may therefore not cohere for another. (Baker, 1992, p. 221)

## **2.7 Venuti: Domestication and Foreignization**

In 1995, the American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti discussed the important translation strategies of Domestication and Foreignization in his book *A Textbook of Translation*.

According to Venuti, the concept of Domestication refers to "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bring the author back home", while the concept of Foreignization refers to "an ethnodeviant pressure on those (cultural) values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad" (1995, p. 20).

Venuti himself advocates the strategy of foreignization because it "entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural values in the target language" (1997, p. 242). He looks at domestication as a form of a dominating Anglo-American translation culture and argues that:

Strategies in producing translations inevitably emerge in response to domestic cultural situations. But some are deliberately domesticating in their handling of the foreign text, while others can be described as foreignising, motivated by an impulse to preserve linguistic and cultural differences by deviating from prevailing domestic values. (1995, pp. 240-244)

## **2.8 Hatim and Mason: Intertextuality and Discourse Pragmatics**

In 1997, Basil Hatim and Ian Mason implemented a discourse analytical approach in their book *The Translator as Communicator*. They discussed intertextuality and described it as being a “precondition for the intelligibility of texts” (Hatim & Mason 1997, p. 219).

The two notable authors summed up the whole matter by saying that intertextuality can operate at “any level of text organization” (Hatim & Mason, 1997, p. 18), involving phonology, morphology, syntax or semantics (Hatim, 1997b, p. 201). This covers all *macro* and *micro* elements that assist readers in recognizing the intended meaning from the text. From his perspective, Hatim (1997b) designates the intertextual context of a text as “all the other relevant prior texts which the various textual clues in a given utterance conjure up for a given language user on a given occasion of use” (p. 200).

Munday (2008) commented on the approach of Hatim and Mason by stating that:

Hatim and Mason's 'foundations of a model for analysing texts' (1997) incorporate and go beyond House's Register analysis and Baker's pragmatic analysis. They combine the kind of bottom-up analysis discussed in the Camus example with some top-down consideration of the higher levels of discourse. Language and texts are considered to be realizations of sociocultural messages and power relations. They thus represent discourse in its wider sense. (p. 157)

## 2.9 Conclusion

This chapter briefly discussed key translation theories and linguistic approaches generally relevant to the subject of this thesis. It started with an overview about the history of philology as described by Nida (2001), highlighting the important role played by Holmes (1972) in coining the name *translation studies*, then moved to discussing linguistic meaning and equivalence as suggested by the Russian–American linguist Roman Jakobson (1959). This is followed by references to some contributions from House (1997), Nida & Taber (1982), Newmark (1981/1988), Baker (1992), Venuti (1995) and Hatim & Mason (1997).

After laying out this important theoretical background, the following chapter will begin the core discussion of this thesis by exploring the relationship between translation and the language of the Holy Qur'an. The main focus will be on Qur'anic translation difficulties and the question of untranslatability.

## Chapter Three: Discussing the Untranslatability of the Holy Qur'an

### 3.1 Overview

The Holy Qur'an is the highest authority in Islam and the foremost source of Islamic teachings. It offers an unrivaled comprehensive religious philosophy for all Muslims worldwide so they can find, among other things, guidance in all aspects of their lives. Along with Sunna<sup>2</sup>, the Qur'an lays down the guiding codes for social and moral behaviors, including Shari'ah laws, Ahkam (الأحكام الشرعية), i.e. (rulings of the Islamic Law), Fiqh (الفقه), i.e. (jurisprudence), Hudood (الحدود), i.e. (punishments), etc.

“For Muslims, the Qur'an is the eternal and indisputable word of God... it is the cornerstone of every believer's faith and morality” (Esposito, 2004, p. 27).

In the introduction of his Qur'anic translation work, *The Qur'an: A new translation*, Abdel Haleem (2005) explains the importance of the Qur'an to Muslims by saying:

The Qur'an was the starting point for all the Islamic sciences: Arabic grammar was developed to serve the Qur'an, the study of Arabic phonetics was pursued in order to determine the exact pronunciation of Qur'anic words, the science of Arabic rhetoric was developed in order to describe the features of the inimitable style of the Qur'an, the art of Arabic calligraphy was cultivated through writing down the Qur'an, the Qur'an is the basis of Islamic law and ideology; indeed as the celebrated fifteenth century scholar and author Suyuti said, 'Everything is based on the Qur'an. The entire religious life of the Muslim world is built around the text of the Qur'an. (p. ix)

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<sup>2</sup> Oxford Bibliographies Research Guide, quoting Brown (2010, p. 5), explains the term *Sunna* in these words: “Sunna” is the Arabic term for the Prophet Muhammad's way of life and legal precedent. It comes from the pre-Islamic Arab notion of Sunna as the way of life of a tribe, which is reflected in the Qur'an's use of the word to mean “the ways of God” (Qur'an 33:37, 62) or “ways of life” of earlier peoples (Qur'an 3:137).

For his part, Ahmed Ali (1998) notes that “Muslims in general, and rightly so, accept the Qur'an as the only true, complete and preserved Word of Allah (God) in existence nowadays, as no one is considered a Muslim without believing so” (p. 1). Concerning the name of the Qur'an, Ahmed Ali states that:

Al-Shafi'i is reported to have said that '*Al-Qur'an*' is a Name given to the Word of Allah that had been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). The word is neither derived from *qara'a* "قَرَأَ" 'to recite', nor the hamzah 'ء' is one of its constituents. It is a name for the Book of Allah just like the *Torah* and the *Injil*. (1998, p. 23)

### 3.2 Qur'anic Text Untranslatability Argument

Recently, studying the accuracy and functionality of English translations of the Holy Qur'an in general has become particularly important. The events of September 11, 2001, have created an unprecedented academic interest in Islam and its Holy Book. Besides, the majority of Muslims worldwide are non-Arabic speakers, so they read and study the Holy Qur'an in its translation form. For them, it is the prime source for learning Islamic teachings and obtaining the right advice and guidelines for their lives as noted above.

For centuries, the uniqueness of the Holy Qur'an's language and structure has established what can be described as a prevailing assumption of the untranslatability of Qur'anic texts amongst linguists and translators along with a generally-accepted principal that the translation of the Qur'an should not be approached in the same way as in the case of human literary works. This is because the Qur'anic text comes with layers of meanings and messages; many of them are communicated via the power of allegorical language. For example, figures of speech, such as metonymy and metaphor, are used extensively throughout Islam's Holy Book to convey specific figurative meanings or send a particular message to a particular audience.

For instance, the addressees in the context of ﴿أَفْضَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ﴾ are married couples while in ﴿وَإِذَا صَرَيْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾ are Muslims in general. For these reasons, many

scholars believe that the Holy Qur'an should be explained only in the form of exegesis, not translation.

Arthur Arberry (1955), author of *The Koran Interpreted*, highlights the point of untranslatability in his book's introduction by noting that "since the Koran is to the faithful Muslim the very Word of God, from earliest times orthodox opinion has rigidly maintained that it is untranslatable, a miracle of speech which it would be blasphemous to attempt to imitate" (p. ix).

On examining the linguistic difficulties in translating the Holy Qur'an from Arabic into English, Ali, Brakhw, Nordin, and Ismail (2012) investigated many lexical, syntactic, and semantic problems. They say, for example, that "one of the lexical problems in translating the Holy Qur'an is... the absence of the equivalent of Islamic terms. These terms have no direct counterpart in English, compelling the translator to convey them in a communicative manner" (p. 1). Ali et al. (2012) further note that "the Holy Qur'an features many polysemic words in its structure. For instance, the word ummah (أُمَّة - people) has nine polysemic meanings" (p. 2).

In his recent book *How to Read the Qur'an*, the American academic Carl W. Ernst (2011) discussed this notion and argued that "the concept of untranslatability relates to the doctrine that the Qur'an is inimitable (i'jaz) and that it demonstrates an eloquence that is beyond human power" (p. 68).

Allaithy (2014) summarizes the whole issue in the following telling words:

Determining the sense in a sacred text, expressed deliberately in a certain way is not always an easy thing to do because when the sense is fully recognised, often the final product is no more than an explanation of the original. There are never clear-cuts all the time as far as religious texts are concerned. Religious texts often have a share of mystery about them that is not easily conceived or translated; this means that there are many cases where understanding the full sense of a text is an impossibility. (p. 124)



### **3.3 Conclusion**

This chapter highlighted the importance of the Holy Qur'an to Muslims and discussed the question of untranslatability that often arises during the translation of the Noble Book.

As the topic of Qur'anic translation in general is rich and wide-ranging, this thesis primarily focuses on the language and usage of metonymy, as an important figure of speech, and its role in communicating the Qur'anic messages.

Having said that, the following chapters will narrow down the discussion to metonymy, its definitions and usage in the Holy Qur'an in general, and Surat an-Nisa in particular. The concepts of untranslatability and inimitability will also be covered during the analysis of the selected metonymic examples, if applicable.

## Chapter Four: Definitions and Types of Metonymy

This chapter introduces definitions and types of metonymy in Arabic and English as well as its relation to other closely linked figures of speech, specifically synecdoche (المَجَازُ المُرْسَل) and metaphor (الْإِسْتِعَارَةُ).

### 4.1 Metonymy in the Arabic Language

Kenayah [كِنَايَة] is the Arabic equivalent for metonymy. The following section will provide some key dictionary and scholarly definitions to introduce metonymy and its types in the Arabic language with interesting examples.

#### 4.1.1 Definitions of Metonymy in Arabic Lexicography

The majority of Arabic lexicons discussed the concept of metonymy, as a figure of speech and rhetorical device, during the process of explaining its root verb *kana* كَنَى. Two of the most authentic definitions provided by two key classical Arabic dictionaries that echo or summarize other Arabic definitions are presented below:

In the *Lexicon of Lessan al-Arab* لِسَانُ الْعَرَبِ, Ibn Manzur (630-711 A.H./1232-1311 C.E.) explains metonymy in the following words:

{*Kunya* كُنْيَة (using nicknames or indirect words) comes in three forms: (a) a metonymic expression used to avoid profanity or obscene language, (b) a special nickname used with a particular person out of respect, and (c) a nickname that is used instead of the person's name, becoming associated with that person exactly as his name... *Kenayah* كِنَايَة [metonymy] refers to speaking about something but meaning something else,<sup>3</sup>}, (my translation).

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<sup>3</sup>«الْكُنْيَةُ عَلَى ثَلَاثَةِ أَوْجِهٍ: أَحَدُهَا أَنْ يَكُنَى عَنِ الشَّيْءِ الَّذِي يَسْتَفْحَشُ ذِكْرَهُ، وَالثَّانِي أَنْ يَكُنَى الرَّجُلَ بِاسْمِ تَوْقِيرٍ وَتَعْظِيمٍ، وَالثَّلَاثُ أَنْ تَقُومَ الْكِنْيَةُ مَقَامَ الْاسْمِ فَيَعْرِفُ صَاحِبَهَا بِهَا كَمَا يَعْرِفُ بِاسْمِهِ. وَالْكِنَايَةُ أَنْ تَتَكَلَّمَ بِشَيْءٍ وَتُرِيدُ غَيْرَهُ». (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).

In the *Lexicon of al-Qamos al-Moheet* الفَيْرُوزِآبَادِيّ Fairuzabadi (729-817 A.H./1329-1415 C.E.) defines metonymy as follows:

{Metonymy is to use a certain word to give a certain meaning, speak about something but you mean something different, or to use a word that relates to the meaning literally or allegorically,<sup>4</sup>}, (my translation).

Similar definitions are given by other leading Arabic lexicons, including the *Language Standards Lexicon* اللُّغَةِ مُعْجَمُ مَقَائِيسُ اللُّغَةِ by Ibn Faris إِبْنُ فَارِسٍ (?-395 A.H./?-1004 C.E.)<sup>5</sup>.

#### 4.1.2 Definition of Metonymy by Arabic Rhetoricians

In his seminal book *Dalail al-I'jaz* دَلَائِلُ الْإِعْجَازِ (Intimations of Inimitability), the leading Arabic language scholar and literary theorist Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani عِبْدُ الْقَاهِرِ الْجُرْجَانِيّ (400-471 A.H./1010-1078 C.E.) discussed metonymy in details and provided the following meaning:

{*Kenayah* [metonymy] occurs when the speaker wants to give a certain meaning but without using the relevant direct word, which is designated naturally for that intended meaning in the language. He, instead, opt for using another word that is closely related to or suggested by the original to communicate his message. For example, describing a woman as نُورُومُ الصُّحَى, a 'late riser' (i.e. she sleeps up to the forenoon instead of waking early in the morning), is a metonymic expression used

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<sup>4</sup> «يَكْتُو كِتَابِيَّةً: تكلم بما يستدل به عليه، أو أن تتكلم بشيء وأنت تريد غيره، أو بلفظ يجاذبه جانباً حقيقةً ومجازاً». (القاموس المحيط لمجيد الدين محمد الشيرازي الفيروز آبادي، 2005).

<sup>5</sup> «الكاف والنون والحرف المعتل يدلُّ على توريةٍ عن اسمٍ بغيره. يقال: كنييت عن كذا. إذا تكلمت بغيره مما يُستدلُّ به عليه. وَكُنُوتٌ أيضاً. وَمَا يُوَضِّحُ هَذَا قَوْلُ الْقَائِلِ: (وإيٌّ لأكتو عن قُدُورٍ بغيرها \*\*\* وأعرُوبٌ أحياناً بما فأصارُح). ألا تراه جعلَ الكِنْيَاةَ مَقَابِلَةً لِلْمَصَارِحَةِ. ولذلك تَسَمَّى الكُنْيَاةُ كُنْيَاةً، كَأَنَّهَا تَوْرِيَةٌ عَنِ اسْمِهِ». (معجم مقاييس اللغة لأبي الحسين أحمد بن فارس، 2001).

to refer to a rich woman who employs retinue of servants and leads a luxurious lavish life,<sup>6</sup>}, (my translation).

Tabanah (1988) devoted a full section to metonymy in his book *Lexicon of Arabic Rhetoric* مُعْجَمُ الْبَلَاغَةِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ and outlined that this term, i.e. *Kenayah*, has many definitions in the Arabic language. He discussed the most famous five definitions, the top of which is a meaning that is almost the same one provided by the Cambridge Dictionary: “metonymy is to refrain from naming something directly, opting for using a word that has a description one of its qualities or features” (p. 593) (my translation).<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.2 Types of Metonymy in Arabic Rhetoric

Tabanah (1988) debated different types of metonymy as suggested by some leading Arabic scholars, including Ibn al-Sarraj إِبْنُ السَّرَّاجِ (?-316 A.H./?- 928 C.E.), Ibn al-Athir إِبْنُ الْأَثِيرِ (558-637 A.H./1163-1239 C.E.), al-Sakkaki السَّكَّاكِيُّ (555-626 A.H./1160-1229 C.E.), and others. He summarized different types of metonymy in the Arabic Language in the following three main categories:

- **Metonymy of Quality:** (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ صِفَةٍ)
- **Metonymy of Described:** (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ مَوْصُوفٍ)
- **Metonymy of Attribution:** (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ نِسْبَةٍ)

The following section will explain the aforementioned three types of metonymy with some representative examples and interesting lines of Arabic poetry followed by brief explanations to spell out the context and message of metonymic expressions.

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<sup>6</sup> «المراد بالكناية هاهنا أن يريد المتكلم إثبات معني من المعاني، فلا يذكره باللفظ الموضوع له في اللغة، ولكن يجيء إلى معنى هو تاليه وردفه في الوجود، فيومئ به إليه، ويجعله دليلا عليه، مثال ذلك قولهم... في المرأة: نُؤْمُ الضُّحَى والمراد أنها مترفة مخدومة، لها من يكفيها أمرها». (دلائل الإعجاز، عبد القاهر الجرجاني، 1984).

<sup>7</sup> «الكناية هي ترك التصريح بالشيء إلى مساويه في اللزوم، لينتقل منه إلى المألوم». (معجم البلاغة العربية، بدوي طبانة، 1988).

#### 4.2.1.1 Metonymy of Quality: (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ صِفَةٍ)

Metonymy of Quality means to attribute a certain trait to the described object with the aim of conveying a message or highlighting a deep meaning that is associated with, or understood from, that trait. Thus, this type of metonymy, i.e. (الْكِنَايَةُ عَنْ صِفَةٍ), consists of the following three main elements:

- (a) (اللَّفْظَةُ الْمُسْتَعْمَلَةُ صِفَةً لِلْمَوْصُوفِ), i.e. the literal word that is used to attribute a certain trait to the described object.
- (b) (الْمَوْصُوفُ), i.e. the described object; someone or something referred to using the rhetorical power of metonymy.
- (c) (الصِّفَةُ الْمَكْنَى عَنْهَا), i.e. the underlying message/the deep meaning intended to be conveyed by, or understood from, the use of metonymy.

For example, in an expressive and elegiac line of poetry, the pioneering Arab female poet al-Khansa الخنساء (?-24 A.H. /?- 644 C. E.) remarkably utilized the powerful effect of Metonymy of quality, to describe the three unique qualities of her deceased brother Sakhr, by saying:

طَوِيلُ النَّجَادِ، رَفِيعُ الْعِمَادِ \*\*\* كَثِيرُ الرَّمَادِ، إِذَا مَا شَتَا<sup>8</sup>

*{His sword has long suspensory cords, his abode is a place known for its visitors*

*\*\*\* (and ovens of) his house become full of ashes in the wintertime}, (my*

*translation).*

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<sup>8</sup>«من قصيدة "أغبيي جودا ولا تجمدا" " للخنساء-مناخير بنت عمرو بن الحارث بن الشريد المثلمية رضي الله عنها -المتوفاة سنة 24 هـ / 645م». (الموسوعة العالمية للشعر العربي "أدب"، 2016).

In a grief-stricken and mournful tone, al-Khansa here tries to express her deep sorrow and passionate grief about her brother's death by metonymically underlining his three unrivaled qualities as follows:

- (طَوِيلُ النَّجَادِ): literally, 'he owned a sword with long suspensory cords'. Metonymically, 'he was a tall and strong man'. This is because swords made in this way naturally require tall and strong men.
- (رَفِيعُ الْعِمَادِ): literally, 'his abode was a place well known for its visitors (mainly because of its high pillars)'. Metonymically 'he was a person of exalted nobility'. The poet is attempting here to stress that her late brother was a noble-born, reputable and decent man. He enjoyed a high and esteemed position in the society because houses built in this way (using high pillars) customarily refer to upper class and nobility.
- (كَثِيرُ الرَّمَادِ إِذَا مَا شَتَا): literally, 'in the wintertime, (ovens of) his house become full of ashes'. Metonymically "he was a generous, philanthropic, bountiful and open-handed man". Al-Khansa's deep message here is: Sakhr was well known for big-heartedness, generosity, and kindness to everyone, especially in the wintertime when help and relief are most needed. The presence of so many ashes in his house refers to his considerable and keen efforts to consistently provide food and all kinds of hospitality to his visitors, the poor, etc.

Thus, this line of poetry may be briefly explained as follows: "*His sword has long suspensory cords* for being a man of tall stature and strong body. *His house is a place well known for its visitors* because of nobility and decency. *(Ovens of) his house become full of ashes in the wintertime* because of much cooking for guests and the needy.

#### 4.2.1.2 Metonymy of Described: (كِنَايَةٌ عَن مَوْصُوفٍ)

Metonymy of Described means to mention the quality and attribution but omit the described object.

The leading Egyptian poet and dramatist Ahmed Shawqi (1287-1351/1868- 1932 C.E.) provided his readers with the following prime and representative example for the *metonymy of described*:

وَلِي بَيْنَ الصُّلُوعِ دَمٌ وَلَحْمٌ \*\*\* هُمَا الْوَاهِي الَّذِي تَكِلُ الشَّبَابَا<sup>9</sup>

{And within my ribs are flesh and blood: \*\*\* (they are) my broken heart that bereaved of youth}, (my translation).

Literally, the two Arabic words (دَمٌ وَلَحْمٌ) in the aforementioned line of poetry means *flesh and blood* but the deep meaning that is understood from the context is largely different. The poet here used the figurative power of *metonymy of described* to refer metonymically and indirectly to his broken heart and emotional pain without the need to name what he meant directly, because, by the power of metonymy, the message will be more eloquent, articulate and communicative.

Abu al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi (أَبُو الطَّيِّبِ الْمُتَنَبِّي (303-354 A.H./915- 965 C.E.), the celebrated Arabic language poet, was successful also in utilizing the powerful effect of *metonymy of described* in the following line of poetry:

وَمَنْ فِي كَفِّهِ مِنْهُمْ قَنَاءٌ \*\*\*\* كَمَنْ فِي كَفِّهِ مِنْهُمْ خِصَابٌ<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>من قصيدة "سلوا قلبي" لأحمد شوقي المتوفى سنة 1351هـ/1932م. (ديوان الشوقيات، 2015، تقدم محمد حسين هيكل، دار الكتب العلمية، بيروت، لبنان).

<sup>10</sup>من قصيدة "بغيرك زاعياً عبت الدئاب" لأبي الطيب المتنبّي المتوفى سنة 354هـ/965. (الموسوعة العالمية للشعر العربي "أدب"، 2016).

{Those of them who hold lances in their hands \*\*\* are not better than those of them who put henna on their palms}, (my translation).

The poet here tries to undermine the self-confidence and morale of the enemies of his king, Sayf al-Dawla سَيْفُ الدَّوْلَةِ الحَمْدَانِيّ (303-356 A.H./915-963 C.E.), the ruler of Aleppo at his time.

Al-Mutanabbi metonymically compares their men to their women in terms of lacking bravery and courageousness. In the first half of the line, he refers to their men while in the second half to women. His goal here is to brand their fighters as weak and faint-hearted: *weapons* in their weak hands are no more than *henna* decorating their women's palms.

#### 4.2.1.3 Metonymy of Attribution: (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ نَسَبِيَّةٍ)

In this type of metonymy, the quality and the described object are mentioned while the attribution is entirely omitted.

The poet Zeyad al-Ajam زَيْادُ الأَعْجَمِ (?-100 A.H./?-718 C.E.) wanted to praise the generosity and good manners of Abdullah bin al-Hashraj عَبْدُ اللهِ ابْنِ الحَشْرَجِ (?-90 A.H./?-708 C.E.), Nisabur's ruler at his time, but without naming him directly. Therefore, he resorted to the *metonymy of attribution* and composed the following beautiful line of poetry:

إِنَّ السَّمَاخَةَ وَالْمُرْوَةَ وَالتَّدَى \*\*\* فِي قُبَّةٍ ضُرِبَتْ عَلَى ابْنِ الحَشْرَجِ<sup>11</sup>

{Liberality, considerateness and nobility\*\*\* are all in Ibn al-Hashraj's tent}, (my translation).

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<sup>11</sup>من قصيدة "إِنَّ السَّمَاخَةَ وَالْمُرْوَةَ وَالتَّدَى" لزياد الأعجم - أبو أمانة زياد العبدي - المتوفى سنة 100 هـ/718م. (شبكة الديوان العربي، 2016).



The described *المُوصوفُ* here is represented by 'Ibn al-Hashraj', the quality *الصفة* is signified by the attributes of 'liberality, considerateness and nobility'. These good manners, however, are not used in this context to refer directly to the described himself. Instead, they are used to link/attribute the aforementioned attributes to the ruler's place of residence by using the power of metonymy of attribution.

Al-Mutanabbi, in another line of poetry full of personal vanity and pride, tries to assert his leadership in the Arabic poetry and the uniqueness of his poems by saying that everybody (even blind and deaf people) knows his poetry:

أَنَا الَّذِي نَظَرَ الْأَعْمَى إِلَى أَدَبِي \*\*\* وَأَسْمَعْتُ كَلِمَاتِي مَنْ بِهِ صَمَمٌ<sup>12</sup>

{I am the one whose incomparable verse can be even seen by the blind \*\*\* and the one whose magnificent poems can be even heard by the deaf}, (my translation).

The poet here remarkably used the powerful effect of metonymy of attribution to attribute this unique quality to himself, emphasizing his unrivaled literary capabilities and the far-reaching effect of his poems.

In this line of poetry also, there is another figure of speech, which is synecdoche, as we can see from *نَظَرَ الْأَعْمَى إِلَى أَدَبِي* and *وَأَسْمَعْتُ كَلِمَاتِي مَنْ بِهِ صَمَمٌ* (*seen by the blind... heard by the deaf*).

Due to the rareness of metonymy of attribution in Arabic, the analytical discussion in chapter six and chapter seven of this thesis will focus mainly on metonymy of quality and metonymy of described.

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<sup>12</sup>من قصيدة "واختر قلباه ممتن قلبه شيم" لأبي الطيب المتنبي المتوفى سنة 354هـ/965م. (الموسوعة العالمية للشعر العربي "أدب"، 2016).

## 4.2.2 Subtypes of Metonymy in Arabic

In addition to the above-mentioned three types, Tabanah (1988) notes that for some Arabic rhetoricians, including the leading grammarian and rhetorician al-Sakkaki, metonymy also covers the following rhetorical instruments:

- (a) **Insinuation** (التعريض): The act of saying something bad or insulting in an indirect way.<sup>13</sup>
- (b) **Allusion** (التلويح): A statement that refers to something without mentioning it directly.<sup>14</sup>
- (c) **Allegory; Figuration** (الرمز): A symbolic representation.<sup>15</sup>
- (d) **Gesture** (الإيماء): an action performed to convey one's feelings of intentions.<sup>16</sup>
- (e) **Intimation; indirect reference** (الإشارة): To say or suggest (something) in an indirect way.<sup>17</sup>

## 4.3 Metonymy in the English Language

### 4.3.1 Definitions of Metonymy in English Lexicography

Etymologically, according to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), the word metonymy is originally imported, via Latin, from the Greek word metōnumia, literally “change of name,” and dates back to the mid-16th century. The following examples of various dictionary definitions will provide more insightful and clear explanations:

Metonymy, (from Greek metōnymia, “change of name,” or “misnomer”), figure of speech in which the name of an object or concept is replaced with a word closely related to or suggested by the original, as “crown” to mean “king” (“The power of the crown was mortally weakened”) or an author for his works (“I’m studying Shakespeare).

Encyclopædia Britannica (2016)

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<sup>13</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary (2008).

<sup>14</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary (2008).

<sup>15</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary (2008).

<sup>16</sup> New Oxford American dictionary (2010).

<sup>17</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary (2008).

The substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant, for example *suit* for *business executive*, or *the track* for *horse racing*.

New Oxford American Dictionary (2010)

When something is referred to by a word which describes a quality or feature of that thing.

Cambridge Dictionary (2008)

Expressions in which you refer to something using the name of something else that is closely related to it, as, for example, when journalists use the expression **Downing Street** to refer to the British Prime Minister.

Macmillan Dictionary (2007)

#### 4.3.2 Definition of Metonymy by English Rhetoricians

Webster (1900) argues that “much of the force of figures of speech is derived from the suggestive quality of the specific words employed” (p. 250). When discussing metonymy, he suggested the following definition:

Metonymy is the substitution of the name of one thing for that of another to which the former bears a known and close relation. The most common of these known and close relations are those of cause and its effects, of container and the thing contained, and of sign and the thing signified. (p. 250)

Radden and Kövecses (1996) believe that metonymy is “a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealized cognitive model” (p. 21).

Newmark (1988) points out that metonymy occurs ‘where the name of an object is transferred to take the place of something else with which it is associated’ (cited in Ali et al., 2012, p. 2).

Gibbs (1994) pays special attention to the linguistic effect of metonymy and says that “our ability to draw metonymic inferences, where we infer whole from parts or parts from wholes, is one of the special characteristics of the poetics of mind” (cited in Panther & Radden, 1999, p. 62).

#### **4.4 Types of Metonymy in English Rhetoric**

There are different types of metonymy in English suggested by some leading English language scholars, but the following section will briefly discuss the three most important types.

##### **(A) Referential and Propositional Metonymy**

Warren (2006) proposed two types of metonymy: referential metonymy and propositional metonymy, noting that where the former is based on reference-based relations, such as between cause and effect or container and content, the latter on antecedent-consequent relations.

##### **(B) Serial Metonymy**

Nerlich and Clarke (2001) suggested a different type called serial metonymy. In the introduction of their book, they noted that:

Metonymy has been studied for at least two thousand years by rhetoricians, for two hundred years by historical semanticists, and for about ten years by cognitive linguists. However, they all have neglected one peculiar aspect of metonymy: its serial nature. (p. 1)

For them, serial metonymy refers to “metonymic chains that present themselves as either synchronic lexicalized chains... or diachronic chains where links in the series may be missing, i.e., no longer accessible to the members of the speech community” (cited in Díaz-Vera, 2015).

##### **(C) Conceptual metonymy**

Panther, Thornburg, and Barcelona (2009) pay more attention to what is called conceptual metonymy. They define this type of metonymy by saying: “conceptual metonymy is a cognitive process that is pervasive in grammar, the lexicon, conceptual structure, and language use” (p. 92).

## 4.5 Metonymy and other Similar Figures of Speech

“Whether it be synecdoche, metaphor, or metonymy, there is still a figure.”

J.H. Merle d’Aubigné (1847, p. 90)

In the previous section, it was clear that metonymy in the Arabic language is largely distinguishable from other key figures of speech. However, when it comes to English, metonymy is frequently confused with two other important figures of speech: synecdoche and metaphor. Some scholars even question the status of metonymy itself as an independent figure of speech. The following section will discuss this important point and explore different opinions and arguments suggested by some leading language scholars and researchers in this regard.

### 4.5.1 Metonymy and Synecdoche

Webster (1900) defines synecdoche as being “that figure of speech in which a part is put for the whole or the whole for a part...” (p. 263).

In their book, *Tropical Truth(s)*, Burkhart and Nerlich (2010) explain the difference between metonymy and synecdoche as follows:

Metonymy is based on qualitative, synecdoche on quantitative relations that is on set-inclusion. Metonymy is based on our world-knowledge about space and time, cause and effect, part and whole; whereas, synecdoche is based on our taxonomic or categorical knowledge. Metonymy exploits our knowledge of how the world *is* [emphasis in original], synecdoche of how it is *ordered* [emphasis in original] in our mind. (p. 311)

### 4.5.2 Metonymy and Metaphor

For metaphor, the issue is more complicated. Many scholars profoundly questioned the relationship between the two concepts throughout history. Warren (2006) notes that:

Metaphor and metonymy are... the two master tropes which have intrigued past and present scholars. It is generally accepted that they are fundamentally different, but it is also often conceded that it is not always clear whether one should classify a given expression as metaphorical or metonymic. (p. 13)

As noted in chapter one, according to Panther and Radden (1999), “one of the most meticulous thinkers of antiquity, Aristotle, did not recognize the distinctive character of metonymy and reduced it to a subtype of metaphor” (p. 1). Nerlich and Clarke (2001) draw our attention to the fact that “the old substitution view of metonymy continues to shine through the cognitive analysis of metaphor when certain patterns of metonymy, such as container for contents are evoked” (p. 246).

Some Arabic language scholars, including Diya al-Din Ibn al-Athir (d. 1239 C.E.), share the same idea; i.e. looking at metonymy as a part or subcategory of metaphor, not a fully independent figure of speech. Tabanah (1988) says that Ibn al-Athir has argued that “metonymy is, in fact, a part of metaphor” (p. 549). Nevertheless, Ibn al-Athir outlined that there is a key difference between the two concepts: metaphor uses direct expressive words to convey the intended meanings while metonymy employs indirect symbolic words to communicate its message (pp. 593-594).<sup>18</sup>

Some modern language researchers disagree with the aforementioned arguments and offer a different point of view. In their book *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphor and metonymy are different kinds of processes: “Metaphor is principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another... Metonymy, on the other hand, has primarily a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to stand for another” (p. 36).

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<sup>18</sup> «وذهب ابن الأثير وغيره إلى أن الكناية جزء من الاستعارة... ويفرق بينهما من وجه آخر، وهو أن الاستعارة لفظها صريح، والصريح هو ما دل عليه ظاهر لفظه، والكناية ضد الصريح لأنها على دول عن ظاهر اللفظ». (معجم البلاغة العربية، بدوي طبانة، 1988).

The two authors also note that the distinction between metaphor and metonymy is “real but often confusing” and provided the following “basic distinction” between the two concepts:

In *a metaphor* [emphasis in original], there are two domains: the target domain, which is constituted by the immediate subject matter, and the source domain, in which important metaphorical reasoning takes place and that provides the source concepts used in that reasoning... In *a metonymy* [emphasis in original], there is only one domain: the immediate subject matter. There is only one mapping; typically the metonymic source maps to the metonymic target (the referent) so that one item in the domain can stand for the other. (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 265)

In addition, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) argue that “when distinguishing metaphor and metonymy, one must not look only at the meanings of a single linguistic expression and whether there are two domains involved. Instead, one must determine how the expression is used” (pp. 266-267).

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed in detail the definitions of metonymy in both the Arabic and English languages along with the relationship between metonymy and other similar figures of speech, specifically metaphor and synecdoche. Dictionary meanings and scholarly opinions were explored with various examples to enrich the discussion and cover this important topic with authentic definitions and different intellectual views.

The chapter also investigated different types of metonymy in the English and Arabic languages with examples, paving the way for discussing this thesis’s research methodology, which is the topic of the next chapter.

## Chapter Five: Research Methodology

In the previous chapter, definitions and types of metonymy in Arabic and English as well as similarities with other figures of speech were explored with representative examples and scholarly opinions. This chapter discusses the general research methodology of this thesis and consists of three sections. The first section deals with the data collection approach. The second section explains the analysis methodology, and the final section is devoted to highlighting limitations of the analysis.

### 5.1 Data

As the primary focus of this thesis is on the remarkable figurative effect of metonymy in communicating various messages throughout the Holy Qur'an, with an emphasis on Surat an-Nisa, meanings of Qur'anic metonymic expressions are explained in the study using leading Arabic/Arabic dictionaries, the main ones being *Lessan al-Arab* and *al-Qamos al-Moheet*. The contexts and messages of selected ayahs and metonymic words are introduced by consulting some leading books of tafseer. In addition, English/English dictionaries, such as New Oxford American Dictionary (2010) and Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008), are also consulted throughout commentaries to help scrutinize meanings of words used by the translators in various metonymic contexts.

At the end, the two English translations *The Koran Interpreted* by Arthur Arberry (1955) and *The Noble Qur'an* by Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali and Muhsin Khan (1997), are examined and analyzed mainly to explore the effect and communicability of metonymic meanings to non-Arabic speaking readers through the offered English translations. These two English translations of the Qur'an are selected based on:

- a) **Style of rendition:** Hilali-Khan's (1997) translation is generally source-oriented and depend heavily on the explication strategy/addition technique. Arberry (1955)'s translation, on the other hand, comes sometimes literal and sometimes communicative, but he generally tries to be faithful to the original SL without inserting extra explanations or additions.



- b) **Ideological backgrounds:** Arberry is a Christian British orientalist, Khan is a non-Arab Muslim (Pashtun) scholar, and al-Hilali is an Arabic speaking Muslim scholar.
- c) **Educational background:** The three translators worked as academics at different universities in different countries, each with a direct interest in Qur'anic studies.

## 5.2 Translators' Background

### 5.2.1 Arthur John Arberry

According to Oxford Islamic Studies (2016), Arthur J. Arberry was born at Buckland, Portsmouth in England and educated at Pembroke College, Cambridge. Appointed in 1944 to the chair of Persian at London University, he later returned to Pembroke as Sir Thomas Adams Professor of Arabic, a post which he held for the remainder of his life.

Mohammed (2005) notes that “the 1955 translation of Arthur Arberry...was the first English translation by a bona fide scholar of Arabic and Islam... his title, *The Koran Interpreted*, acknowledged the orthodox Muslim view that the Qu’ran cannot be translated, but only interpreted” (pp. 58-71).

Arberry worked hard in his translation to capture the Qur'an's literary character. Oxford Islamic Studies (2016) quotes Arberry's words in his book's introduction about the translation difficulties he faced: “I have been at pains to study the intricate and richly varied rhythms which—apart from the message itself— constitute the Koran's undeniable claim to rank amongst the greatest literary masterpieces of mankind” (p. x).

Concerning the quality of Arberry's translation work, Mohammed (2005) argues that:

The translation is without prejudice and is probably the best around. The Arberry version has earned the admiration of intellectuals worldwide, and having been reprinted several times, remains the reference of choice for most academics. It seems destined to maintain that position for the foreseeable future. (pp. 58-71)

### 5.2.2 Hilali-Khan

Jassem (2014) says that *The Noble Qur'an* by Hilali-Khan “was first published in Istanbul, Turkey in 1974 and then in the USA... another edition was published by King Fahd Complex... under the title *The Noble Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*” (p. 238).

In this thesis, the last edition, published in 1997, will be used as the source for Hilali-Khan’s translation.

Mohammed (2005) described Hilali-Khan’s translation as being “... the most widely disseminated Qur'an in most Islamic bookstores and Sunni mosques throughout the English-speaking world...” However, he later notes that this is “because of its free distribution by the Saudi government” (pp. 58-71).

Despite its wide circulation, *The Noble Qur'an* translation by Hilali-Khan was received with outspoken criticism from some researchers for what they call a strong Salafi perspective or a highly dogmatic approach in its interpretation. Mohammed (2005) notes that:

Whereas most other translators have tried to render the Qur'an applicable to a modern readership, this Saudi-financed venture tries to impose the commentaries of Tabari (d. 923 C.E.), Qurtubi (d. 1273 C.E.), and Ibn Kathir (d. 1372 C.E.), medievalists who knew nothing of modern concepts of pluralism. (p. 58-71)

Linguistically speaking, Jassem (2014) criticized the absence of accuracy of expression in Hilali-Khan’s translation and cited many examples, including 18 examples about “imprecise” alone, noting that “many words were rendered imprecisely. That is, they were not given their true equivalents, thus leading to imbalanced equivalence” (p. 250).

Dr. Abdul Halim, Arabic Professor at SOAS, London University, said that they find Hilali-Khan’s translation “repelling” (cited in Jassem, 2014, p. 269).

The aforementioned criticism may or may not be valid and justifiable, but, in this thesis, the focus is limited to the translation of metonymy and how its magnificence, as an instrumental figure of speech, is reflected in the translation of selected examples from the Qur'an in general and in Surat an-Nisa in particular. Therefore, where Hilali-Khan's translation is concerned, the investigation here will be primarily on how it linguistically rendered the selected metonymic expressions.

There is a balance here in these translation sources. There is a translation offered by a non-Muslim orientalist, Arthur John Arberry, which tries to capture the Qur'an's literary character and recognize the orthodox Muslim view, alongside another translation provided by Hilali-Khan that, arguably, attempts to reflect the Salafi understanding.

### 5.3 Methodology

Naturally, every translator adopts his own style of translation in dealing with religious texts, influenced by ideological, educational, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Personal touches find their way into the translation process because there is no one unified style or, for example, clear method set for this sensitive type of translation.

Taking the above into account, this thesis adopts the following threefold analytical approach in investigating Qur'anic metonymic examples and their English translations:

- a) Highlighting key metonymic words/phrases in the ST and their renditions in the TT, using a **bold** font, to make it easier for readers to spot and be aware of main quotes in the selected ayahs.
- b) Introducing meanings of metonymic words/phrases using some of the leading books of Tafseer, such as Tafseer al-Tabari الطَّبْرِيِّ (224-310 A.H./839-923 C.E.), al-Baghawi البَغَوِيِّ (436-510 A.H./1045-1117 C.E.), al-Qurtubi الْقُرْطُبِيِّ (600-671 A.H./1204-1273 C.E.), Ibn Kathir ابنُ كَثِيرٍ (701-704 A.H./1301-1372 C.E.), and Tantawy طَنْطَاوِيَّ (1346-1431 A.H./1928-2010 C.E.), among other Islamic and Arabic resources, as needed.

- c) Analyzing English renditions of metonymic expressions, as provided in the two selected English translations, in terms of functionality and metonymic meaning communicability. Dictionary definitions and theoretical approaches may be utilized in the analysis as required, especially analytical methodologies that examine translation methods and cultural aspects of translation, such as Newmark's (1988) approach in his book *A Textbook of Translation* and Venuti's (1995) concept of domestication and foreignization in his book *The Translator's Invisibility*.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Analysis**

Due to the large number of metonymic expressions throughout the Holy Qur'an in general, and in Surat an-Nisa in particular, and the limitations of the study, not all metonymic expressions will be analyzed in this thesis. Instead, some key representative metonymic examples, along with their English translations, will be selected and linguistically analyzed based on their metonymic or allegorical messages.

#### **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the data collection approach utilized in this study and provided a brief factual background about the two selected translations and their translators: *The Koran Interpreted* by Arberry (1995) and *The Noble Qur'an* by Hilali-Khan (1997).

It also discussed analysis methodology and highlighted the threefold analytical approach used in investigating metonymic examples and their English translations. The limitations of the analysis were also emphasized to make it clear that only some representative metonymic examples and their English translations will be analyzed.

In the following chapter, an introduction regarding the language of the Holy Qur'an will be laid out before delving into the detailed translational assessment for some general metonymic examples from the Holy Qur'an.

## Chapter Six: Some Illustrative Examples of Metonymy in the Holy Qur'an

### 6.1 Overview

In this chapter, there will be a presentation of four examples of metonymy in the Holy Qur'an and their English translations by Arberry (1955) and Hilali-Khan (1997) followed by a discussion and commentary just to illustrate the point of discussion and introduce the key element of the thesis that will be discussed in detail in chapter seven.

Linguistically speaking, the language of the Holy Qur'an is unique in style, peerless in eloquence, and unrivaled in figurative language utilization. As Sherwani (2016) precisely puts it:

The Qur'an is the masterpiece of Arabic language from many standpoints such as linguistics and stylistics. The vocabulary, style, eloquence, effectiveness, and the rich poetic rhythm of this masterpiece, which lead to its linguistic and stylistic uniqueness, are the miracles of a Miracle, i.e. the Qur'an. (p. 417)

Specifically speaking, metonymy, as a key figure of speech and effective rhetorical device, plays a vital role in expressing the accurate meanings of certain messages throughout the Qur'an. This is done, for example, by utilizing polite and respectful expressions to explain/discuss sensitive subjects like marital intimacy, adultery, divorce, and other personal aspects.

Al-Jurjani (1984), in *Dalail al-I'jaz* دلائل الإعجاز (Intimations of Inimitability), states that metonymy is more eloquent and expressive than using direct words, maintaining that

“when you use metonymy to convey a certain meaning, you, in fact, strengthen the intended meaning and make it more eloquent, articulate and emphatic”<sup>19</sup> (my translation).

Al-Jurjani (1984)’s argument is largely accurate. If we look closely at the various metonymic expressions throughout the Holy Qur’an, we notice that they are more beautiful, remarkable, and expressive than direct words.

For example, in ayah No. 29, Surat al-Israa (The Night Journey), Almighty Allah Says:

﴿وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا﴾ (سورة الإسراء - الآية رقم 29)

This is translated by Arberry (1955) as: “And keep not thy hand chained to thy neck, nor outspread it widespread altogether, or thou wilt sit reproached and denuded.” [Surat al-Israa, 17: 29].

Portraying miserliness in the form of a hand tied/chained to the neck is an outstanding perceptible representation and sensible depiction of miserliness, a bad habit that should not be associated with true believers. This is because a hand tied to the neck cannot move freely and, therefore, cannot be generous. It cannot show compassionate and practical love to the needy or even give zakat or charity. Likewise, a fully stretched hand refers to a wastrel; a spendthrift or a person who does not keep anything for himself. As we can notice, in this simple example, metonymy (metonymy of quality, specifically speaking) was able, in few words, to encourage Muslims to pursue a wise and healthy way of life, away from miserliness or dissipation.

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<sup>19</sup>«الكنايةُ أبلغُ مِنَ الصُّريحِ: أنك لما كُتبت عن المعنى زدت في ذاته، بل المعنى أنك زدت في إثباته، فجعلته أبلغ وأكاد وأشد». (دلائل الإعجاز، عبد القاهر الجرجاني، 1984).

## 6.2 Translation Analysis

The figurative power of metonymy is employed in the following ayahs mainly to evoke or call to mind specific meanings that are, expectedly, not effectively communicable or conveyable via direct words.

### 6.2.1 The Translation of Metonymy of Described (كِنَايَةً عَنْ مَوْصُوفٍ), in *Surat al-Baqarah*, 2: 187: ﴿فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُمْ...﴾

#### Example 1

ST:	﴿أَجَلَ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصَّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ هُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُمْ وَأَبْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ﴾ سورة البقرة-الآية رقم (187)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“Permitted to you, upon the night of the Fast, is to go in to your wives; -- they are a vestment for you, and you are a vestment for them. God knows that you have been betraying yourselves, and has turned to you and pardoned you. So <b>now lie with them</b> , and seek what God has prescribed for you.” [ <i>Surat al-Baqarah</i> , 2: 187]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	“It is made lawful for you to have sexual relations with your wives on the night of As-Saum (the fasts). They are Libas [i.e. body cover, or screen, or Sakan, (i.e. you enjoy the pleasure of living with her - as in Verse 7:189) Tafsir At-Tabari], for you and you are the same for them. Allah knows that you used to deceive yourselves, so He turned to you (accepted your repentance) and forgave you. So <b>now have sexual relations with them</b> and seek that which Allah has ordained for you (offspring) [ <i>Surat al-Baqarah</i> , 2: 187]

## Commentary

In the above ayah, the general meaning of the metonymic expression ﴿فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُمْ﴾ is clear to the majority of Arabic speakers from the context, as it speaks about marital intimacy but in a gracious metonymic language and expressive linguistic style. However, for the majority of non-Arabic speaking Muslims - estimated by Mohammed (2005) to be more than 80% of Muslims worldwide- a functional and accurate translation is imperative for them to understand the meaning and get the message. Therefore, the following analysis will introduce the meaning first, using some leading Arabic lexicons and books of Tafseer, and then move to the English translation analysis.

Morphologically, the four-letter verb (بَاشَرَ) is of the measure (فَاعِلٌ) and its infinitive noun, i.e. (مُبَاشَرَةٌ), is of the measure (مُفَاعَلَةٌ)<sup>20</sup>. According to al-Hamalawi, (1999, p. 24), the measure of (مُفَاعَلَةٌ):

Mostly denotes the meaning of sharing in an action. Verbs of this measure carry the connotation of duality or sharing, i.e., there is an interaction between two parties sharing in a deed on equal footing. When (فَاعِلٌ) denotes an act that immediately affects an object (direct object or accusative), the form of (فَاعِلٌ) expresses the effort or attempt to perform that act upon the object, in which case the idea of reciprocity (المُشَارَكَةُ) is added when the effort is necessarily or accidentally a mutual one”. (Cited in Elaissawi, 2016, p. 64)

The trilateral verb (بَشَرَ), according to Ibn Manzur (1993) means “he became changed in his بَشْرَةٌ (or complexion) by the annunciation of an event” (Lane’s translation,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibn Manzur (1993) outlines also that the verb (بَاشَرَ) conveys different meanings in different communicative contexts, as in (بَاشَرَهُ التَّعْجِيمُ), i.e. “enjoyment attended him; as though it clave to his skin”, (فَبَاشَرُوا رُوحَ الْيَقِينِ), i.e. “and they felt the joy and happiness that arise from certainty”, etc. (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 207).



1968, p. 207). In the context of the above ayah, the six-letter infinitive noun (مُبَاشَرَةٌ) signifies the meaning of a husband becoming in contact with his wife, skin-to-skin (Ibn Manzur, 1993)<sup>21</sup>.

Metonymically, according to Ibn Kathir (1999), the expression ﴿فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ﴾ is a message to Muslims that it has been made permissible for them the night preceding fasting to approach their wives and enjoy marital intimacy with them, so they can have children. The late Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Tantawy (1997), echoed the same interpretation and noted that ﴿فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ﴾ literally means to put skin to skin and is used in this context by the Holy Qur'an as a metonymy for marital intimacy.<sup>22</sup>

#### (A) **TT1:**

By using “lie with them” as an equivalent for the Qur'anic metonymic expression ﴿فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ﴾, Arberry (1955) here attempted to produce a TT that represents the message provided by the Qur'anic text and communicate its intended meaning effectively. According to the New Oxford American Dictionary (2010), “lie with” means to “have sexual intercourse with.” This English expression communicates the meaning properly without losing the metonymic style or hurting the reader's eyes with unnecessary or unpleasant words about this sensitive topic.

In this rendition, Arberry (1955) seems to be applying the concept of “faithful translation” suggested decades later by Newmark (1988). Newmark says that “A faithful translation attempts to reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the original within the

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<sup>21</sup> «والبشّر جمع بشرة وهو ظاهر الجلد... ومنه اشتقت مُباشرة الرجل المرأة لِتصامَ أبشارِهِما». (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).

<sup>22</sup> «﴿فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ﴾ من المباشرة وأصلها اتصال البشرة بالبشرة، وكفى بما القرآن عن الجماع الذي يستلزمها». (التفسير الوسيط لسيد طنطاوي، 1997، سورة البقرة الآية رقم 187).

constraints of the TL grammatical structures... it attempts to be completely faithful to the intentions and the text-realization of the SL writer” (1988, p. 46).

**(B) TT2:**

Here, Hilali-Khan (1997) applied the literal rendition approach and were partly successful in conveying the general meaning. However, they completely lost the metonymic effect when they literally translated ﴿فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُمْ﴾ as “have sexual relations with them” without trying to utilize linguistic equivalents available in the TL (as in Arberry’s rendition above) to produce a clear figurative output. In short, the beautiful metonymic language is lifeless in this example.

The two authors seem to prefer the style of “free translation” in this context. According to Newmark (1988), “free translation reproduces the matter without the manner or the content without the form of the original” (p. 46).

**6.2.2 The Translation of Metonymy of Quality (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ صِفَةٍ), in Surat al-A'raf, 7:**

189: ﴿فَلَمَّا تَغَشَّاهَا ...﴾

**Example 2**

ST:	﴿فَلَمَّا تَغَشَّاهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِيفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهِ﴾ سورة الأعراف-الآية رقم (189)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“Then, <b>when he covered her</b> , she bore a light burden and passed by with it”. [ <i>Suraht al-A'raf</i> , 7: 189]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	“ <b>When he had sexual relations with her</b> , she became pregnant and she carried it about lightly”. [ <i>Suraht al-A'raf</i> , 7: 189]

## Commentary

In example 2 above, the key metonymic word, ﴿تَغَشَّاهَا﴾, shares almost the same meaning given by the word ﴿بَاشِرُوهُنَّ﴾ in the preceding example but in a different context and with a different metonymic message.

Morphologically, the trilateral verb (عَشَا) is of the measure (فَعَلَّ) and, according to Ibn Manzur (1993), literally means to cover or conceal<sup>23</sup> and also comes in many other nonliteral contexts, such as (عَشَى إِلَيْهِ مَحْجَرًا), i.e. “he did to him (أَتَى إِلَيْهِ) a forbidden action”, (عَشَى اللَّيْلَ), i.e. “the night was, or became, dark”, (عَشِيَهُ الْأَمْرُ), i.e. “it came upon, [or invade, so as to surprise, or so as to overwhelm] as a thing that covered, him, or it”, (إِذْ يَغْشَى السَّدْرَةَ مَا ), (يَغْشَى), i.e. “when there was coming upon the lote-tree so as to cover it, or overspread it, what was so coming”, etc. (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 2261).

Ibn Manzur (1993) also outlines that the infinitive noun (عَشْيَانٌ) is a synonym of (إِثْيَانٌ) and that (التَّعَشَّى) primarily signifies (المُلاَبَسَةُ), metonymically used in the sense of (جَمَاعٌ), i.e. lovemaking or martial intimacy. Tantawy (1997) notes too that the root of the word ﴿تَغَشَّاهَا﴾ has several other related meanings. The word (العِشَاءُ) is a cover stretched atop of something in order to protect or conceal it. (العَاشِيَةُ) means a shed that provides protection against the rain or sun, etc. The word (التَّعَشَّى) is used as a metonymy for lovemaking.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>«عشما... العِشَاءُ: العِشَاءُ، عَشَّيْتُ الشَّيْءَ تَغَشِّيَةً إِذَا عَطَيْتَهُ... وَعَلَى بَصَرِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ عَشَّوْهُ وَعَشَاوَهُ أَي غَطَّاهُ». (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).

<sup>24</sup>«العِشَاءُ: غطاء الشيء الذي يستتره من فوقه، والعَاشِيَةُ الظلة التي تظل الإنسان من سحابة أو غيرها. والتَّعَشَّى كتابة عن الجماع. أي فلما تغشى الزوج الذي هو الذكر الزوجة التي هي الأنثى وتدثرها لِقِضَاءِ شَهْوَتِهَا». (التفسير الوسيط لسيد طنطاوي، 1997، سورة الأعراف، الآية رقم 189).

**A) TT1:**

Arberry's (1955) rendition in this example is vague to some extent, and therefore, the metonymic expression is not fully communicable to English readers. This is because using the expression "he covered her" for ﴿تَغَشَّاهَا﴾ does not provide a clear meaning that supports the general context of the ayah, and it therefore, loses the original metonymic effect. The Merriam Webster Dictionary (2016), for example, provides sixteen definitions for the verb "to cover" with only one secondary meaning that reads: "to copulate with (a female animal) <a horse covers a mare>". Many other English dictionaries, including the Cambridge Dictionary, do not include any relevant meaning that can support the rendition provided by Arberry (1955) in this case. The meaning might have been more understandable had he used the expression "laid with her," as he did in example 1 above.

**B) TT2:**

Once again, as in example 1, Hilali-Khan (1997) apply the same technique of literal direct translation, offering "he had sexual relations with her" for ﴿تَغَشَّاهَا﴾, overlooking the strong effect of metonymic language. Refraining from using a functional figurative equivalent here did not help in communicating the essence of the metonymic message in this exceptionally expressive Arabic word ﴿تَغَشَّاهَا﴾.

In literal translation, according to Newmark (1988), "the SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context" (p. 46).

### 6.2.3 The Translation of Metonymy of Quality (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ صِفَةٍ), in *Surat al-Ma'idah*, 5:

75: ﴿كَانَا يَأْكُلَانِ الطَّعَامَ﴾

#### Example 3

ST:	﴿مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ كَانَا يَأْكُلَانِ الطَّعَامَ﴾ سورة المائدة - الآية رقم (75)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a Messenger; Messengers before him passed away; his mother was a just woman; <b>they both ate food.</b> ” [ <i>Suraht al-Ma'idah</i> , 5: 75]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	The Messiah ['Iesa (Jesus)], son of Maryam (Mary), was no more than a Messenger; many were the Messengers that passed away before him. His mother [Maryam (Mary)] was a Siddiqah [i.e. she believed in the words of Allah and His Books (see Verse 66:12)]. <b>They both used to eat food</b> (as any other human being, while Allah does not eat). [ <i>Suraht al-Ma'idah</i> , 5: 75]

#### Commentary

The above ayah represents metonymy in one of its purest Arabic forms because it comes with the remarkable effect of euphemism. The key metonymic phrase in this example ﴿كَانَا يَأْكُلَانِ الطَّعَامَ﴾ mainly aims at refuting the claim that Jesus was a God, utilizing the power of euphemistic and metonymic language.

Naturally, eating food is the typical habit of almost every living being, so why is it considered linguistically exceptional here? The answer lies in its metonymic effect. The simple figurative message here is: if Jesus was a god, he would not have to eat food and answer the call of nature (defecate) like humans do because humanly flawed/weak nature cannot be associated with a deity or divine being.

For general readers, the metonymic message here may sound quite confusing linguistically and a further clarification from exegetical references may be required to acquire the metonymic message. The following explanation and analysis shall explain it further.

According to al-Tabari (1994), the reference here to “eating food”, in the context of speaking about Jesus and his mother Mary, is meant to say that they need what other normal humans need (food, drinks, etc.) so that they can keep up the strength of their bodies. As a result, any one with these basic human needs definitely is not a god.<sup>25</sup>

#### **A) TT1:**

In Arberry’s (1955) translation, semantic, lexical, and grammatical equivalences were largely maintained. However, the huge metonymic message is almost missing in this rendition. It seems that Arberry’s translation adopts the word-for-word technique or what was termed later by Nida and Taber (1982) as “formal correspondence,” where “the features of the form of the ST have been mechanically reproduced in the receptor language” (p. 201).

#### **B) TT2:**

In this ayah, Hilali-Khan (1997) adopted a more meaningful and expressive approach. They produced a literal translation, like what Arberry did above, but successfully utilized the effective technique of “bracketed explication” to convey the meaning and communicate the intended message. It can be argued here that by inserting an extra explanation/addition between rounded brackets, the two authors mainly aimed at avoiding any translation loss in the TT.

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<sup>25</sup>«وقوله: " كَانَا يَأْكُلَانِ الطَّعَامَ"، خبر من الله تعالى عن المسيح وأمه: أخصما كانا أهل حاجة إلى ما يغذوهما وتقوم به أبدائهما من المطاعم والمشارب كسائر البشر من بني آدم، فإن من كان كذلك، فغير كائن إلها...». (تفسير الطبري، 1994، سورة المائدة، الآية رقم 75).

Ahmed Ali (1998) calls the above technique “legitimate additions in translation,” outlining that “this actually happens when the translator comes across a feature of the SL that might not exist in the TL and necessitates explanation” (p. 180). However, Ahmed Ali (1998) further notes that “there must be a limit for addition. Uncalled-for additions are not legitimate because there is always the danger of the actual meaning being affected” (p. 181).

#### 6.2.4 The Translation of Metonymy of Quality (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ صِفَةٍ), in *Surat al-Ma'idah*, 5:

64: ﴿وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ﴾ and ﴿بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ﴾

#### Example 4

ST:	﴿وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ﴾ عُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنْفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ﴾. سورة المائدة-الآية رقم (64)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“The Jews have said, ‘ <b>God’s hand is fettered.</b> ’ Fettered are their hands, and they are cursed for what they have said. Nay, but <b>His hands are outspread</b> ; He expends how He will.” [ <i>Suraht al-Ma'idah</i> , 5: 64]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	“The Jews say: “ <b>Allah's Hand is tied up</b> (i.e. He does not give and spend of His Bounty).” Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for what they uttered. Nay, <b>both His Hands are widely outstretched.</b> ” [ <i>Suraht al-Ma'idah</i> , 5: 64]

#### Commentary

Metonymy in the above ayah is different from the aforementioned examples in more than one way. The main difference is that in this case there are two contradictory qualities: miserliness and generosity, expressed in the form of a tied hand for the first ﴿وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ﴾ and two outstretched hands for the second ﴿بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ﴾. In addition, there are two unequal parties: the Jews and their Lord, Almighty Allah.

The trilateral verb (عَلَّ) is both transitive and intransitive verb and, according to Ibn Manzur (1993), literally means to make or cause something to enter into a thing, such as (عَلَّ الدُّهْنَ فِي رَأْسِهِ), i.e. “he made the oil to enter amid the roots of the hair of his head”, (عَلَّ شَعْرَهُ بِالطَّيِّبِ), i.e. “he made the perfume to enter amid his hair”, (عَلَّ الْمَغَاوِرَ), i.e. “he (a man) entered into the midst of the deserts, or waterless deserts”, (عَلَّ الْمَاءَ بَيْنَ الْأَشْجَارِ), i.e. “the water ran amid the trees”, etc. (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 2277).

Ibn Manzur (1993) notes also that the verb (عَلَّ) conveys many other meanings in different contexts, as in (عَلَّلْتُ يَدَهُ إِلَى عُنُقِهِ), i.e. “I confined his hand to his neck with the ring”, (عَلَّ أَسِيرًا بِغُلٍّ مِنْ قَدِّ وَعَلَيْهِ شَعْرٌ), i.e. “he confined a captive with a غُلٌّ of thongs upon which was hair”, (مَا لَهُ أَلٌّ وَعُلٌّ), i.e. “What ails him?”, (عَلَّ صَدْرُهُ), i.e. “his bosom was, or became, affected with dishonesty, or insincerity”, (عَلَّتْ يَدُهُ إِلَى عُنُقِهِ), i.e. “his hand was withheld from expenditure”, (وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ), i.e. “and the Jews said, The hand of God is shackled”, etc. (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 2279).

For the second metonymic expression, i.e. ﴿بَلَّ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ﴾, the trilateral verb (بَسَطَ) is of the measure (فَعَلَ) and literally means to spread out; expand or extend (Ibn Manzur, 1993)<sup>26</sup>, as in (بَسَطَ الثَّوْبَ), i.e. “he expanded or unfolded the garment”, and (بَسَطَ رِجْلَهُ), i.e. “he stretched forth, or extended, his leg”, etc. (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 203). Ibn Manzur (1993) outlines that the verb (بَسَطَ) comes also in many nonliteral contexts, such as (لَئِنْ بَسَطْتَ إِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقْتُلَنِي), i.e. “he stretched forth his hand opened”, (بَسَطَ إِلَى يَدِهِ بِمَا أُحِبُّ وَأَكْرَهُ), i.e. “assuredly if thou stretch forth towards me thy hand to slay me”, (وَيَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ )

<sup>26</sup>«البسطُ نقبض القبض... وبسط الشيء: نشره... وبسط إلى يده بما أحب وأكره، وبسطها مدها». (معجم لسان العرب جمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).



وَأَلْسِنَتَهُمْ بِالسُّوءِ), i.e. “and they will stretch forth towards you their hands and their tongues with evil”, (الْخَيْرُ يَقْبِضُهُ وَالشَّرُّ يَبْسُطُهُ), i.e. “wealth makes him closefisted, tenacious, or niggardly; and poverty makes him open-handed, liberal, or generous”, (بَسَطَ يَدَهُ فِي الْإِنْفَاقِ), i.e. “He was liberal or bountiful or munificent”, etc. (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 203).

Metonymically, according to al-Tabari (1994), by saying Allah's hand is tied up, (وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ), the Jews meant that his kindness, generosity, and bounty are not shown to them... ﴿بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ﴾ i.e. his hands are, in fact, fully stretched with bounteousness, generosity, kindness, etc.<sup>27</sup>

#### A) **TT1:**

The translation provided by Arberry (1955) for the first phrase is literal, semantic-oriented and out of metonymic context. The Cambridge Dictionary (2008) defines the verb fetter as “to tie someone to a place by putting chains around their ankles.” The New Oxford American Dictionary (2010) provides a similar meaning: “to restrict or restrain (someone) in an unfair or undesirable fashion.” Therefore, the rendition provided by Arberry in this example focused on the semantic or word-for-word meaning and lost the message of metonymy in ﴿وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ﴾ because the meaning in Arabic is basically about miserliness. A “tightened hand” here is used as a symbol for holding back one’s kindness or generosity; an indication or indirect reference to the bad quality of miserliness.

The message of the second metonymic expression, ﴿بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ﴾, gives a meaning that is totally opposite to the message discussed above. It simply means that

<sup>27</sup> «يقول تعالى ذكره: "وقالت اليهود"، من بني إسرائيل = "يد الله مغلولة"، يعنون: أن خير الله ممسك وعطاؤه محبوس عن الاتساع عليهم... "بل يداه مبسوطتان"، يقول: بل يداه مبسوطتان بالبدل والإعطاء وأرزاق عبادته وأقوات خلقه، غير مغلولتين ولا مقبوضتين». (تفسير الطبري، 1994، سورة المائدة، الآية رقم 64).

Allah's hands are fully stretched with generosity and kindness. Arberry's rendition here may be accepted, but is not fully functional. What meaning will a non-Arabic speaker get from the word "outspread"? The response would be very little in this context due to losing the essence of the metonymic message in the translation of the first phrase.

### **B) TT2:**

Again, Hilali-Khan (1997) use the bracketed addition/explication strategy in their translation to explain and make clearer the meaning of both phrases ﴿وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ﴾ and ﴿بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ﴾ in this context. Although the addition did not capture the meaning precisely, the core of the metonymic message is there. According to Dickins and Hervey (2002), "addition is a technique employed when there is something added and not present in the ST" (cited in Albarakati, 2014, p. 4).

### **6.3 Conclusion**

This chapter started with an overview that emphasized the uniqueness of Qur'anic language, highlighting al-Jurjani (1984)'s argument that metonymy is more eloquent and expressive linguistically than using direct words to convey specific messages allegorically. It then moved to discussing some general metonymic examples selected from different surahs across the Holy Qur'an and their English translations.

Generally speaking, the renditions provided by Arberry (1955) and Hilali-Khan (1997) transferred the meaning successfully in most cases, but the essence of the metonymic messages was lost sometimes, and the meaning was not fully communicable in some examples. In both translations, the general approach seemed to adopt the style of literal and faithful translations in conveying the intended meanings, while adhering to the lexical structure provided by the SL.

In the following chapter, the focus will shift to discussing some metonymic expressions in Surat an-Nisa, the fourth surah of the Holy Qur'an.

## Chapter Seven: Metonymy in Surat An-Nisa

### 7.1 Overview

Having established the meaning, types, and importance of metonymy, as a key figure of speech, in English and Arabic all through the previous chapters, this chapter will be devoted to introducing Surat an-Nisa and analyzing some of its linguistically communicative metonymic examples. Building on the analysis provided in the preceding chapter, the emphasis here would also be on the way each translator approached metonymic examples, but only in the context of Surat an-Nisa.

### 7.2 Brief background

Surat an-Nisa (translated as “The Women”) is the fourth chapter of the Holy Qur'an that includes 176 ayahs in total. Its unique and unusual title comes mainly from the various references to women in many of its ayahs.

Many Muslim scholars agree that its place of revelation is Medina. Ibn Kathir (1999) reported in his book, *Tafseer al-Quran al-Azim*, citing Ibn Abbas (3 B.H-68 A.H./619-687 C.E.), that “Surat an-Nisa is a Medinan surah.” Al-Qurtubi (1964) adds that “any one examines the commandments revealed in the surah will have no doubt that it was revealed in Madina” (cited in Tantawy, 1997).<sup>28</sup> This simply means that it was revealed at Medina after Prophet Muhammad’s hijra (migration) from Mecca in 622 C.E.

### 7.3 Why Surat an-Nisa?

In this thesis, the extra focus is given to metonymic examples from Surat an-Nisa for more than one reason, including:

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<sup>28</sup>«ومن هنا قال القرطبي: "ومن تبين أحكامها علم أنها مدنية لا شك فيها"». (التفسير الوسيط لسيد طنطاوي، 1997).

- A. Surat an-Nisa contains many metonymic expressions that remarkably discuss important family and general life issues, like marital intimacy, spousal relationships, monotheism, immigration, and more, in a beautiful linguistic style and expressive figurative language.
- B. It contains rich dialogues about orphans, inheritance, women, marriage laws, and even “tayammum”, more than any other surah in the Holy Qur’an and in different contexts.
- C. It has an impressive thematic coherence from the beginning to the very end despite the relatively long period of its revelation (ayahs explaining the rights of orphans, for example, were revealed after the Battle of Uhd [عَزْوَةٌ أُحُدٌ] in 3 A.H. while the ayah explaining the Islamic act of tayammum was revealed during the Battle of Bani al-Mustaliq [عَزْوَةٌ بَنِي الْمُصْطَلِقِ] in 5 A.H.).

#### 7.4 Nine Metonymic Examples from Surat An-Nisa

Surat an-Nisa contains many metonymic expressions that cover various topics and subjects. Shanakhnakh (2011), for example, extracted and explained more than twenty key instances that offer striking metonymic messages from Surat an-Nisa alone.

In this analysis, the number of selected ayahs for investigation will be limited because the current study is not interested in reviewing large numbers of ayahs; instead, the aim is to introduce different topics in different metonymic contexts and to avoid similarity/repetitions as much as possible.

For example, Surat an-Nisa has four metonymic expressions that offer comparable metonymic messages: ﴿فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ﴾, ﴿الَّتِي دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ﴾, ﴿لَا مَسْئَةَ النِّسَاءِ﴾ and ﴿أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ﴾. Though the contexts are different, all of them focus on marital intimacy and spousal private relationships in one way or another. The same can be seen in ﴿وَلَا تَظْلَمُونَ فَيَالَا﴾ and ﴿لَا يَظْلَمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ﴾ where both phrases speak about Allah’s justice. Consequently, only selected ayahs and their English

translations will be analyzed, as in the preceding chapter, in terms of the communicability of the metonymic messages.

#### 7.4.1 The Translation of Metonymy of Quality (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ صِفَةٍ), in *Surat an-Nisa*, 4:21:

﴿وَقَدْ أَفْضَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ﴾

##### Example 5

ST:	﴿وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذْتُمْ مِنْكُمْ مِّيثَاقًا عَلِيمًا﴾ سورة النساء - الآية رقم (21)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“How shall you take it, <b>when each of you has been privily with the other</b> , and they have taken from you a solemn compact?” [ <i>Surat an-Nisa</i> , 4:21]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	“And how could you take it (back) <b>while you have gone in unto each other</b> , and they have taken from you a firm and strong covenant?” [ <i>Surat an-Nisa</i> , 4:21]

##### Commentary

This ayah discusses an important aspect of the spousal relationship, especially when couples are on the verge of divorce. It refutes some husbands’ improper claim that they can take back the paid dowry after enjoying martial intimacy with their wives and after the wives have taken from them a firm and solemn compact. According to al-Tabari (1994), the meaning of ﴿وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ﴾ is how would you take back the paid dowry while you already had an intimate relationship with them (your wives) and when they also have taken from you a firm covenant?<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>29</sup>﴿وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ﴾: وعلى أي وجه تأخذون من نساءكم ما آتيتموهن من صدقاتهن إذا أردتم طلاقهن واستبدال غيرهن بمن أزواجهن، وقد أفضى بعضهم إلى بعضهم فتباشرتم وتلامستم». (تفسير الطبري، 1994، سورة النساء، الآية رقم 40).

Morphologically, the trilateral verb (فَضَا) is of the measure (فَعَلَ) and literally means a place that has become wide, roomy or spacious (Ibn Manzur, 1993)<sup>30</sup>. The infinitive noun (الْفُضُو) signifies (الْحُلُو), i.e. the status of being open, empty or vacant. Arabs also use expressions that denotes other similar literal meanings, such as (فَضَا الشَّجَرُ بِالْمَكَانِ), i.e. the trees became plentiful in the place, and (فَضَا دَرَاهِمَهُ), i.e. he left his cash scattered.

The four-letter verb (أَفْضَى) is of the measure (أَفْعَلَ) and, according to Ibn Manzur (1993), denotes many nonliteral meanings in different contexts, such as (أَفْضَى فُلَانٌ إِلَى فُلَانٍ), i.e. “became in the space, or the place, or quarter, of such a one”, (أَفْضَيْتُ إِلَى الشَّيْءِ), i.e. “I came to, or reached, the thing”, (أَفْضَى بِهِ الطَّرِيقُ إِلَى وَعْرٍ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ), i.e. “the road brought him to a rugged tract of land”, (أَفْضَى إِلَى أَمْرَاتِهِ), i.e. “he became in contact with his wife, skin to skin”, (أَفْضَيْتُ إِلَيْهِ بِالسِّرِّ), i.e. “I acquainted him with the secret”, (وَقَدْ أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ), i.e. “when one of you hath come, and betaken himself, to the other”, etc. (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 2413).

Metonymically, the Qur’anic expression ﴿أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ﴾ in the above ayah discusses the intimate spousal relationships in a courteous and considerate way. In this manner, readers can understand the message without any embarrassment or awkwardness that may be caused by direct literal language.

#### (A) **TT1:**

While the English style of Arberry (1955) is elegant and mature in choosing “you have been privily with the other” for ﴿أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ﴾, the metonymic message is still

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<sup>30</sup>«الفضاء: المكان الواسع من الأرض، والفعل فضا يُفضو فُضُوًا... وقد فضا المكان وأفضى إذا اتسع». (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).

not strongly present in the context or fully communicable to the readers. This is because “privily” has an inference of secrecy. Collins Dictionary (2004) clearly says that “privily” means “in a secret way”. Secrecy is not a perfect match for the legitimate spousal private relationship because it may evoke negative connotations.

**(B) TT2:**

By using “gone in unto each other,” the translation provided by Hilali-Khan (1997) offers a gracious and proper English equivalent for ﴿أَفْضَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ﴾ in a way that preserves the meaning and communicates the metonymic message intelligently. According to the Online Dictionary (2016), to “go in unto” means to “have sexual intercourse with.” By opting for this aforementioned expressive word choice, Hilali-Khan (1997) were able to transfer the figurative message in the ayah to English readers without losing basic lexical and grammatical equivalences.

**7.4.2 The Translation of Metonymy of Quality (كِنَايَةٌ عَنِ صِفَةٍ), in Surat an-Nisa, 4:40:**

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ...﴾

**Example 6**

ST:	﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ وَإِن تَاكُ حَسَنَةً يُضَاعِفْهَا وَيُؤْتِ مِن لَّدُنْهُ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾ سورة النساء- الآية رقم (40)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“Surely <b>God shall not wrong so much as the weight of an ant</b> ; and if it be a good deed He will double it, and give from Himself a mighty wage.” [Surat an-Nisa, 4:40]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	“Surely! <b>Allah wrongs not even of the weight of an atom (or a small ant)</b> , but if there is any good (done), He doubles it, and gives from Him a great reward.” [Surat an-Nisa, 4:40]

## Commentary

This ayah clearly outlines that Almighty Allah does not do wrong to anyone for any act, even for acts of the weight of an ant. Everything is counted and, if good, it will be doubled both in life and after death. Al-Tabari (1994) says that the meaning here is: it is ought to disbelievers to believe in God and the Hereafter and offer help to those in need because Allah does not leave any good deed uncounted and rewarded for, in the present life and the Hereafter as well.<sup>31</sup>

Morphologically, the trilateral verb (فَعَلَ) is of the measure (فَعْلَل) and refers literally to something that has become heavy or weighty, as in (فَأَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ) according to Ibn Manzur (1993)<sup>32</sup>. The infinitive noun (مِثْقَال) is of the measure (مِفْعَال) and mostly denotes the meaning of a weight, as in (أَلْقَى عَلَيْهِ مَنَاقِيلَهُ), i.e. “he threw upon him his weight, or burden”, and (مَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ), i.e. “there is not hidden from thy Lord aught of the weight of the smallest ant” (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 343). The word (ذَرَّةٌ) means the smallest ant.

Metonymically, the Qur’anic expression ﴿لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ﴾ in the above ayah is basically about Allah’s justice and the underlying message is: nothing is left behind and all humans are treated equal for their deeds by Almighty Allah.

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<sup>31</sup> «يعني بذلك حل ثناؤه: وماذا عليهم لو آمنوا بالله واليوم الآخر، وأنفقوا مما رزقهم الله، فإن الله لا يبخس أحدا من خلقه أنفق في سبيله مما رزقه من ثواب نفقته في الدنيا ولا من أجرها يوم القيامة». (تفسير الطبري، 1994، سورة النساء، الآية رقم 40).

<sup>32</sup> «ثَقُلَ الشَّيْءُ ثِقَالًا وَثِقَالَةً، فَهُوَ ثَقِيلٌ، وَالْجَمْعُ ثِقَالٌ... وَقَوْلُهُ تَعَالَى: فَأَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ؛ قَالَ ثَعْلَبُ: إِنَّمَا أَرَادَ مَنْ ثَقُلَ وَزْنُهُ أَوْ خَفَّتْ وَزْنُهُ، فَوَضَعَ الْاسْمَ الَّذِي هُوَ الْمِيزَانُ مَوْضِعَ الْمَصْدَرِ». (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).



## TT1 & TT2:

The two translations are combined here in one analysis due to their comparable renditions.

While the two translations come in the form of reporting rather than finding a good figurative equivalent to represent the scene depicted in the ayah for ﴿لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ﴾, we can clearly see that they both utilized the literal translation approach effectively. This approach was able to communicate the basic elements of the metonymic message from the SL. In addition, Arberry's and Hilali-Khan's renditions imitated the lexical content of the Arabic source precisely and opted for a more common semantic meaning ("weight of an ant/atom") for ﴿مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ﴾. Linguistically speaking, this general meaning provided a good functional equivalent for English readers, as both translations preserved the core meaning and transferred the essence of the metonymic message by using a good equivalent (an ant/atom) for ﴿مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ﴾.

### 7.4.3 The Translation of Metonymy of Quality (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ صِفَةٍ), in *Surat an-Nisa*, 4:42:

﴿يُؤْمِنُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَعَصَوُا الرَّسُولَ لَوْ تُسَوَّى بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ...﴾

#### Example 7

ST:	﴿يُؤْمِنُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَعَصَوُا الرَّسُولَ لَوْ تُسَوَّى بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ وَلَا يَكْتُمُونَ اللَّهَ حَدِيثًا﴾ سورة النساء-الآية رقم (42)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“Upon that day the unbelievers, those who have disobeyed the Messenger, <b>will wish that the earth might be levelled with them</b> ; and they will not conceal from God one tidings.” [Surat <i>an-Nisa</i> , 4:42]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	“On that day those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ) <b>will wish that they were buried in the earth</b> , but they will never be able to hide a single fact from Allah.” [Surat <i>an-Nisa</i> , 4:42]

## Commentary

The above ayah portrays the unbelievers' deep regret and terrible feeling of dreadful guilt in a magnificent metonymic expression. It simply uses the concept of an under earth burial (i.e., complete disappearance), ﴿لَوْ تَسَوَّىٰ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ﴾, as a symbol for regret in the Hereafter for their wrongdoings.

Lexically, the verb (سَوَّى) signifies the meaning of making something equable, level or plain. The five-letter infinitive noun (تَسْوِيَةٌ) is of the measure (تَفْعِيلَةٌ) and denote the same meaning, i.e. making something equal, even, or flat (Ibn Manzur, 1993)<sup>33</sup>.

This verb, according to Ibn Manzur (1993), also provides many other meanings in varying contexts, such as (فَأَمَرَ بِالْخَرَبِ فَسَوَّىٰتُهَا), i.e. “and he gave orders respecting the ruins, and they were levelled”, (سَوَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ رُقِيَّةَ), i.e. “we buried Ru- keiyeh, and made the earth of the grave even, or level, over her”, (بَلَىٰ قَادِرِينَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُسَوَّىٰ بِنَانِهِ), i.e. “to make his hand like the foot of the camel, without fingers”, (سَاوَيْتُ هَذَا بِذَاكَ), i.e. “I raised this so as to make it equal in measure, or quantity, or amount, with that”, (سَوِّ وَلَا تُسَوِّ), i.e. “rectify thou, and do not corrupt, or mar”, (لَوْ تَسَوَّىٰ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ), i.e. “that they were buried, and that the ground were made level over them”, etc. (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 1476).

Metonymically, the Qur’anic expression ﴿لَوْ تَسَوَّىٰ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ﴾, according to Shanakhnakh (2011), is a representation of profound regret, fear of Allah’s punishment and realization of their mistake in adopting the wrong path. To be buried under the earth

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<sup>33</sup> «أرضٌ سَيِّئَةٌ: مستوية؛ قال ذو الرِّمَّة: زهاء بساط الأرض سَيِّئَةٌ مخوفة والمسيء: المكان المستوي... وسَوَّى الشيء وأَسْوَاهُ: جعله سَوِيًّا». (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).

means a complete absence after prominent presence, humility after arrogance and personal vanity.<sup>34</sup>

### **TT1 & TT2:**

For Arabic speakers, the notion of regret is obvious from the context in the ayah, but for non-Arabic speakers a functional and clear translation is instrumental in understanding the intended meaning. Both translations offered a relatively word-for-word translation. This rendition, albeit literal, largely succeeded in conveying the core meaning of the metonymic message.

Specifically, using the phrase “under earth burial” as a symbol for regret communicated the message convincingly because the notion of deep regret is conveyed in the context linguistically and metonymically.

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<sup>34</sup> «جاء معنى الكناية في قوله: ﴿تَسْوَى بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ﴾ شدة الندم، والخوف من عقاب الله... تسوى بهم الأرض يعني خفاؤهم بعد ظهور، وصغارهم بعد علوهم وتكبرهم... فتمنوا لأنفسهم أن تسيخ بهم الأرض». (أسلوب الكناية في القرآن الكريم، الشنخنج، 2011).

#### 7.4.4 The Translation of Metonymy of Described (كِنَايَةٌ عَنِ الْمُصَوِّفِ), in *Surat an-Nisa*,

4:43: ﴿أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ...﴾ and ﴿أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُم مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ...﴾

#### Example 8

ST:	﴿وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَّرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ﴾ سورة النساء-الآية رقم (43)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“if you are sick, or on a journey, or if any of you <b>comes from the privy</b> , or you <b>have touched women</b> , and you can find no water, then have recourse to wholesome dust and wipe your faces and your hands” [Surat <i>an-Nisa</i> , 4:43]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	“And if you are ill, or on a journey, or one of you comes after <b>answering the call of nature</b> , or you <b>have been in contact with women (by sexual relations)</b> and you find no water, perform Tayammum with clean earth and rub therewith your faces and hands (Tayammum)” [Surat <i>an-Nisa</i> , 4:43]

#### Commentary

This ayah establishes a very important Islamic rule about purification, which is “tayammum.” This term was defined earlier in the abstract, it means using the earth for the performance of ablution when water resources are not available. It tells Muslims that if they answer the call of nature, i.e. ﴿أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ﴾, or touch their women, i.e. ﴿لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ﴾, they can resort to tayammum when water is unobtainable.

Morphologically, the active participle noun (غَائِطٍ) is of the measure (فَاعِلٍ) and signifies a wide and depressed piece of land. It is originally derived from the trilateral verb (غَطَّ), which literally means entering into a thing (for instance, entering into water or a valley, etc.). Metonymically, the word (الْغَائِطِ) refers to a place in which one satisfies a

want of nature (Ibn Manzur, 1993)<sup>35</sup>. It used in the above ayah in the same sense. According to al-Tabari (1994), the Arabic word «الغَائِطُ», originally used to refer to wide and depressed valleys, is employed as a metonymy for answering the call of nature, because Arabs used to do this (defecation) in fields up until this practice became an integral part of their culture and daily life.<sup>36</sup>

For the second metonymic expression in the ayah, i.e. «لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ», the triliteral verb (لَمَسَ) is of the measure (فَعَلَ) and, according to Ibn Manzur, (1993), literally means to touch someone or something by hand<sup>37</sup>. The infinitive noun (لَمَسٌ) gives a similar meaning and signifies the senses of feeling or touching. Ibn Manzur (1993) notes that (لَمَسٌ) comes also in other nonliteral contexts, as in (أَلْمَسْ لِي فُلَانًا), i.e. “seek thou for me such a one”, and (مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ بِهِ عِلْمًا), i.e. “whoso pursueth a way whereby he seeketh after knowledge, or science” (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 2673). Metonymically, according to Ibn Manzur (1993), both (لَمَسٌ) and (لَامَسَ) refer allegorically to lovemaking or marital intimacy, as in «لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ»<sup>38</sup>.

Therefore, in the above ayah, there are two key metonymic expressions with different meanings: «جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ» and «لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ». The first one speaks about answering the call of nature (i.e., defecation), while the second one, represented here by

<sup>35</sup> «والعَوَظُ والغَائِطُ: المتَّبِعُ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ مع طُمَأْنِينَةٍ، وجمعه أَعْوَاطٌ وَعُوطٌ وغيَاطٌ وغيَاطٌ... منه قيل للمَطْمَئِنِّ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ غَائِطٌ، ولموضع قَضَاءِ الْحَاجَةِ غَائِطٌ... والتَّغْوِيطُ: كناية عن الحَدِيثِ». (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).

<sup>36</sup> «الغَائِطُ: ما اتسع من الأودية وتصوب، وجعل كناية عن قضاء حاجة الإنسان، لأن العرب كانت تختار قضاء حاجتها في الغيطان فكثير ذلك منها حتى غلب عليهم. ذلك». (تفسير الطبري 1994، سورة النساء، الآية رقم 43).

<sup>37</sup> «اللَّمَسُ: الجَسُّ، وقيل: اللَّمْسُ المَسُّ باليد، لمسه يلمسه ويلمسه لمساً ولامسه». (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).

<sup>38</sup> «واللَّمْسُ كناية عن الجماع، لَمَسَهَا يَلْمِسُهَا ولَامَسَهَا، وكذلك الملامسة». (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).

the metonymy of quality, discusses the private spousal intimate contact (i.e. marital intimacy).

**(A) TT1:**

The English translation offered by Arberry (1955) for ﴿جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ﴾ expressed the meaning functionally and reflected the metonymy appropriately for English readers. Instead of using the blatant word “defecation” directly to explain the meaning, Arberry opted for a figurative alternative that can evoke the intended meaning in mind. The Merriam Webster Dictionary (2008) defines “privy” as “a small outdoor building that is used as a toilet.” Linguistically, the translation echoed the source in structure and was successful in communicating the message.

Yet, the concept of “privy” in Western culture is not fully equal in meaning to the concept of ﴿الْغَائِطِ﴾ in Arab culture, but the general meaning is still there. In fact, Arberry, in this case, seems to prefer the idea of domestication over foreignization in communicating the meaning. Venuti (1995) outlines that the domesticating method is “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home” (p. 20). He also notes that the foreignizing method is “an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad” (p. 20).

For ﴿لَا مَسْئَةَ السَّاءِ﴾, Arberry used the notion of “touching” as a clever equivalent for spousal private relationships in this context. This approach was effective in communicating the metonymic message because it practically employed a part (i.e., the action of touching) for the whole (i.e., marital intimacy).

**(B) TT2:**

Hilali-Khan’s (1997) rendition for ﴿مَنْ الْغَائِطِ﴾, as “answering the call of nature,” is linguistically beautiful and metonymically communicable. This is because, like Arberry’s

rendition, no direct literal translation is given in a context that has a deep sense of metonymy and euphemism combined.

Cambridge Dictionary (2008) defines “call of nature” as “the need to use the toilet.” The Free Online Dictionary (2016) agrees and says that “answer the call of nature” is an idiom that means “to urinate (pass liquid from the body).”

For ﴿لَا مَسْئَمَةَ السَّاءِ﴾, the two authors used an indirect translation (the notion of “contacting with women”) along with the explication technique (“by sexual relations”) in rendering the meaning between rounded brackets. This style of rendition seems to be effective here in communicating the intended meaning without losing the metonymic effect.

It should be noted in this context that many classical or cultural Arabic expressions, such as ﴿مَنْ الْغَائِطِ﴾, are no longer used in modern Arabic countries and, therefore, the efforts exerted by translators to find an acceptable modern equivalent should be recognized and appreciated. As Allaithy (2014) accurately puts it:

As a result of distance in time and cultural changes some words stop being used, they become obsolete, others appear and as far as the meaning is concerned many changes take place. In other words, the number of associations unique to every word in a language gets affected as a result of for example, cultural changes and also the way a word is being used at a given time. The word-associations become subject to addition and omission. (p. 130)

#### 7.4.5 The Translation of Metonymy of Quality (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ صِفَةٍ), in *Surat an-Nisa*, 4:65:

﴿ حَتَّىٰ يُحْكُمُواكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ... ﴾

#### Example 9

ST:	﴿ فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحْكُمُواكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴾ سورة النساء-الآية رقم (65)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“But no, by thy Lord! They will not believe till they make thee the judge <b>regarding the disagreement between them</b> , then they shall find in themselves no impediment touching thy verdict, but shall surrender in full submission.” [ <i>Surat an-Nisa</i> , 4:65]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	“But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad ﷺ) judge <b>in all disputes between them</b> , and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission.” [ <i>Surat an-Nisa</i> , 4:65]

#### Commentary

The above ayah is a reassuring message to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as it clearly emphasizes that Muslims will be true believers only when they request, and fully accept, their Prophet’s verdicts in all of their disagreements, even the simplest ones, especially when those disagreements are, or have become, an occasion of contention, dispute or disagreement between them.

Morphologically, the trilateral verb (شَجَرَ) is of the measure (فَعَلَ) and literally signifies the meaning of intermixing, or confusion, of tree branches. Ibn Faris (2001) says



that the three letters (الشين), (الجيم) and (الراء) forming the trilateral verb (شَجَرَ) come from two intermixing roots, signifying the status of being, or becoming, overlapped or intricately intermixed<sup>39</sup>.

According to Ibn Manzur (1993), the verb (شَجَرَ) denotes also other nonliteral meanings, such as (شَجَرَ الثَّوْبَ), i.e. “he raised the garment, it having gone down”, (شَجَرَهُ), i.e. “he thrust, or pierced, him with the spear”, (شَجَرَ فَاهُ), i.e. “he opened his mouth”, (شَجَرَ الدَّابَّةَ), i.e. “he made the beast to open its mouth by jerking its bridle to curb it”, (شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ), i.e. “respecting that which hath become complicated, or intricate, or confused, [so as to be a subject of disagreement, or difference,] between them”, etc. (Lane’s translation, 1968, p.1506).

Metonymically, the key metonymic expression in this ayah is ﴿فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ﴾ and in this context means dispute and disagreement according to al-Qurtubi (1964)<sup>40</sup>. Shanakhnakh (2011) agrees and notes that the Arabic word [شَجَار] means quarrel (especially hand-to-hand fighting) and originally refers to the trees’ overlapping branches.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> «الشين والجيم والراء أصلان متداخلان، يقرب بعضهما من بعض، ولا يخلو معناه من تداخل الشيء بعضه في بعض...». (معجم مقاييس اللغة لأبي الحسين أحمد بن فارس، 2001).

<sup>40</sup> ﴿فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ﴾... "شجر" معناه اختلف واختلط؛ ومنه الشجر لاختلاف أغصانه. ويقال لعصي اليهودج: شجار؛ لتداخل بعضها في بعض. قال الشاعر: "نفسى فداؤك والرماح شواجر \*\*\* والقوم ضنك للقاء قيام". (تفسير القرطبي، 1964، سورة النساء الآية رقم 65).

<sup>41</sup> ﴿فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ﴾... "الاشتباك بين الأمور والتداخل بينها، والأصل فيها الشجر، وتداخل أغصانه وتشاجرها، وقد استعمل للخصومة لما فيها من تشابك الأيدي فسمي لذلك شجارا لمشاكلة بينهما". (أسلوب الكناية في القرآن الكريم، الشنخنج، 2011).

## TT1 & TT2:

Both translations offered a word-for-word direct rendition (disagreement and dispute), which was largely successful in conveying the general meaning because metonymy in this example is basically about comparing disagreements among Muslims to tree branches overlapping, which appears in nature as if they are fighting.

This example brings up the question of untranslatability. Principally, the key metonymic effect is missing here due to the uniqueness of this Arabic expression, i.e. ﴿شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ﴾, and the linguistic limitations of English. In addition, the absence of a clear equivalent in the English language for such an expression, and similar ones, can be explained in light of Arab or Bedouin culture. Arabs generally used to employ various forms of nature (desert, valleys, mountains, stars, trees, animals, darkness of night, etc.) heavily in their language (especially in poetry) to express their feelings, emotions, and communicate various messages.

### 7.4.6 The Translation of Metonymy of Described (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ مُؤْصَفٍ), in *Surat an-Nisa*,

4:74: ﴿الَّذِينَ يَشْرُونَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ...﴾

#### Example 10

ST:	﴿فَلْيُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يَشْرُونَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ وَمَنْ يُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيُقْتَلْ أَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾ سورة النساء- الآية رقم (74)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“So let them fight in the way of God <b>who sell the present life for the world to come</b> ; and whosoever fights in the way of God and is slain, or conquers, We shall bring him a mighty wage.” [ <i>Surat an-Nisa</i> , 4:74]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	“Let those (believers) <b>who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter</b> fight in the Cause of Allah, and whoso fights in the Cause of Allah, and is killed or gets victory, We shall bestow on him a great reward.” [ <i>Surat an-Nisa</i> , 4:74]

## Commentary

Normally, selling and purchasing processes are associated in our minds with goods, equipment, materials, or generally sellable/purchasable items. Therefore, the question becomes how can these physical actions be connected to a non-physical concept (selling the present life for the Hereafter)? The answer lies in the underlying metonymic message, which in this example is represented by the metonymy of described.

Shanakhnakh (2011) says that metonymy in ﴿يَشْرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ﴾ refers to asceticism or keeping away from all forms of life's indulgence and following a lifestyle that is more connected to the Hereafter. Shanakhnakh (2011) also believes that the key word here, ﴿يَشْرُونَ﴾, means "to sell" and is a metonymy for engaging in trading transactions. Therefore the meaning is that human life is precious so humans have to decide whether to exchange it for worthless thing (i.e., life's indulgence) or opt for a more valuable and prized alternative (i.e., the Hereafter).<sup>42</sup>

Morphologically, the trilateral verb (شَرَى) is of the measure (فَعَلَ) and literally means to buy something. Ibn Manzur (1993) outlines that this word is a contronym that signifies two opposite meanings at the same time: to sell and to buy<sup>43</sup>, as in (وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ ) أولئك الذين اشتروا ( , i.e. "and they sold him [for a deficient, or an insufficient, price]", (بِخَسٍ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ ) , i.e. "those are they who have purchased error with right direction", (أَصْلَالَهُ بِأَلْهَادِي مَنْ يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاةِ اللَّهِ ( , i.e. "[And of men is he] who sells [himself in the endeavour to obtain the approval of God]", etc. (Lane's translation, 1968, p. 1544).

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<sup>42</sup> ﴿يَشْرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ﴾، الزهد في الدنيا والرغبة في الآخرة... ومعني يشتري (بيع)، وهي كناية عن المتاجرة... ومعناها أن حياة الإنسان لها ثمن؛ فإما يشتري بما ما رخص، أو يشتري بما ما غلا ثمنه». (أسلوب الكناية في القرآن الكريم، الشنخنج، 2011).

<sup>43</sup> «شَرَيْتُ الشَّيْءَ أَشْرَيْتَهُ شَرَاءً، إِذَا بَعْتَهُ وَإِذَا اشْتَرَيْتَهُ أَيضاً وَهُوَ مِنَ الْأَضْدَادِ... وَقَالَ تَعَالَى: "وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةً" أَي بَاعُوهُ». (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993)

Ibn Manzur (1993) further notes that (شَرَى) comes also in contexts that has nothing to do with the concept of selling or buying, as in (شَرَى بِنَفْسِهِ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ), i.e. “he advanced before the people, or party, to their enemy, and fought in defence of them”, (فَعَلَ بِهِ مَا شَرَاهُ), i.e. “he did to him that which occasioned evil to him”, (شَرِيَتْ عَيْنُهُ بِالذَّمْعِ), i.e. “his eye persisted, or persevered, in the shedding of tears”, (شَرَى فِي لِحَامِهِ), i.e. “he (a horse) strained his bridle”, etc. (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 1544).

### **TT1 & TT2:**

The essence of the metonymic message of ﴿يَشْرُونَ﴾ is present in both translations and majority of readers can understand the meaning from the context without resorting to exegetical sources. This functional rendition made the intended figurative meaning communicable because both translations used the phrasal verb “sell for” as an equivalent for ﴿يَشْرُونَ﴾, which is a keen choice. The Arabic verb ﴿يَشْرُونَ﴾ in this instance, according to al-Baghawi (1989), metonymically implies the meaning of selling/exchanging the present life for the Hereafter, i.e., choosing the latter over the former.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, Hilali-Khan’s rendition distinguished itself by using the bracketed explanation technique to stress the identity of the addressees, which are the believers. According to al-Qurtubi (1964), those spoken to or the addressees on this occasion are the believers who present their precious souls and hard-earned money, for the sake of Allah, to win a great reward in the Hereafter.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup>«قيل: نزلت في المؤمنين المخلصين... معناه فليقاتل في سبيل الله الذين يشرون أي: يبيعون الحياة الدنيا بالآخرة ويختارون الآخرة». (تفسير البغوي، 1989، سورة النساء الآية رقم 74).

<sup>45</sup>«قوله تعالى: فليقاتل في سبيل الله الخطاب للمؤمنين... (الذين يشرون) أي يبيعون، أي يبذلون أنفسهم وأموالهم لله عز وجل بالآخرة أي بثواب الآخرة». (تفسير القرطبي، 1964، سورة النساء الآية رقم 74).

#### 7.4.7 The Translation of Metonymy of Described (كِنَايَةٌ عَنِ الْمُصَوِّفِ), in *Surat an-Nisa*,

4:83: ﴿...لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ...﴾

##### Example 11

ST:	﴿وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَدَّاعُوا بِهِ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ﴾ سورة النساء الآية رقم (83)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“When there comes to them a matter, be it of security or fear, they broadcast it; if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, <b>those of them whose task it is to investigate would have known the matter.</b> ” [ <i>Surat an-Nisa</i> , 4:83]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	“When there comes to them some matter touching (public) safety or fear, they make it known (among the people), if only they had referred it to the Messenger or to those charged with authority among them, <b>the proper investigators would have understood it from them (directly).</b> ” [ <i>Surat an-Nisa</i> , 4:83]

##### Commentary

This ayah exposes the behavior of some people who spread stories concerning state security, public safety or fear without verification. If they refer such stories or news to the people in charge, investigators would have better understanding of the whole matter. Morphologically, the trilateral verb (نَبَطَ) is of the measure (فَعَلَ) and literally signifies water coming out of a well when it is first dug (Ibn Manzur, 1993)<sup>46</sup>. The six-letter verb (اسْتَنْبَطَ) is of the measure (اسْتَفْعَلَ) and means eliciting (evoking or drawing out).

<sup>46</sup>«التَّبِيطُ: الماء الذي يَنْبِطُ من قعر البئر إذا حُفرت وقد نَبَطَ ماؤها يَنْبِطُ وَيَنْبِطُ نَبْطًا وَتَبِطًا». (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).

Ibn Manzur (1993) outlines that the verb (استنبط) comes also in many other nonliteral contexts, such as (استنبط الفرس), i.e. “he sought to obtain offspring from the mare”, (استنبطتها), i.e. “he sought what was in her belly”, (نبطي), i.e. “naturalized نبطي or Nabathæan” and (أهل عُمانَ عربٌ استنبطوا وأهلُ البحرينِ نبطٌ استعربوا) i.e. “The people of 'Omán are Arabs who became naturalized Nabathæans, and the people of ElBahreyn are Nabathæans who became naturalized Arabs”, (استنبط منه علماً وخيراً ومالاً), i.e. “he drew forth, elicited, or extorted, (استخرج) from him knowledge, and good, or wealth, and property”, etc. (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 2750).

Metonymically, the key metonymic phrase ﴿يَسْتَبْطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ﴾ in the above example, which is represented here by the metonymy of described, is an impressive linguistic and metonymic expression used in this context to refer to smart and bright-minded people who can understand complicated issues and find reasonable solutions using logical and methodical reasoning.

In this context, the metonymic reference is based on a comparison with those people who are skilled in digging deep into the Earth’s surface to find hidden water resources known only to them based on their experience, logical thinking, and gifted reasoning.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>«جاء معنى الكناية في قوله: ﴿يَسْتَبْطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ﴾... معناه أنهم يستخرجونه من مخائبه ومضائه الخفية عن سواهم؛ لأنهم امتازوا على غيرهم بالنبوغ والفهم، وقد خص قوماً بذلك صرفاً لغيرهم... لأن الأحكام تحتاج إلى استخراج، فكان لها وجه شبه نبط الماء». (أسلوب الكناية في القرآن الكريم، الشنخنج، 2011).

## TT1 & TT2:

The concept of (استنباط) is of the measure of (استفعال) and simply means reasoning (or extracting meanings from texts using the power of the mind and sound reasoning, as defined by Mukhtar Omar, 2008) and is rendered here in both translations in the form of “investigation.” This rendition is relatively correct in this context because, convincingly enough, investigators utilize the power of reasoning and logical thinking in order to understand complicated issues and reach a conclusion or judgment.

This style of translation made the intended meaning largely communicable because it went directly to the essence of the metonymic message. In addition, by adding the word “directly” between rounded brackets, Hilali-Khan’s interpretation used the bracketed explanation technique to further stress the meaning and make it more conveyable.

### **7.4.8 The Translation of Metonymy of Quality (كِتَابَةٌ عَنِ صَفَةٍ), in Surat an-Nisa, 4:101:**

﴿وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ...﴾

#### **Example 12**

ST:	﴿وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَنْ يَفْتِنَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ كَانُوا لَكُمْ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا﴾ سورة النساء الآية رقم (101)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“And when you are <b>journeying in the land</b> there is no fault in you that you shorten the prayer, if you fear the unbelievers may afflict you”. [Surat an-Nisa, 4:101]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	“And when you (Muslims) <b>travel in the land</b> , there is no sin on you if you shorten your <i>Salat</i> (prayer) if you fear that the disbelievers may attack you”. [Surat an-Nisa, 4:101]

## Commentary

In the above ayah, according to al-Tabari (1994), Almighty Allah sends a relieving message to believers by telling them that from now on they can shorten their prayers while travelling in the land to guard against the disbelievers' attacks<sup>48</sup>.

In the Arabic language, the first meaning that comes to our minds upon hearing the word (ضَرَبَ) is “to hit” someone or something. However, in the above metonymic expression, the same word communicates a totally different meaning.

Morphologically, the trilateral verb (ضَرَبَ) is of the measure (فَعَلَ) and, according to Ibn Manzur (1993), literally means to hit or struck someone or something. Ibn Manzur (1993) notes also that (ضَرَبَ) comes in many other different contexts, such as (ضَرَبَ عَلَى الْمَكْتُوبِ), i.e. “he sealed, or stamped, the writing”, (ضَرَبَ بِهِ), i.e. “he cast, threw, or flung, him, or it, upon the ground”, (ضَرَبَ الطِّينَ عَلَى الْجِدَارِ), i.e. “he stuck, or applied, the mud upon the wall, as a plaster”, (ضَرَبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْبَعْثَ), i.e. “the being sent to the war was appointed them and imposed upon them as an obligation”, (سَرَى), i.e. “the night cast its folds of darkness, meaning the night came”, (ضَرَبَ اللَّيْلُ بِأَرْوَاقِهِ), i.e. “he went on in his night-journey, like the pulsing of the vein, while the night was casting its folds of darkness over the earth, and the dawn had almost risen”, (ضَرَبَ الْفَحْلُ النَّاقَةَ), i.e. “the stallion leaped the she-camel”, (ضَرَبَ فِي الْجَزُورِ بِسَهْمِهِمْ), i.e. “he obtained a share, or portion, of the slaughtered camel”, (ضَرَبَ أَحْمَاسًا لِأَسْدَاسٍ), i.e. “such a one strives to deceive, or circumvent”<sup>49</sup>, لا تُضْرَبُ

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<sup>48</sup> «القول في تأويل قوله: ﴿وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾ قال أبو جعفر: يعني... وإذا سرتم أيها المؤمنون في الأرض " فليس عليكم جناح "، يقول: فليس عليكم حرج ولا إثم " أن تقصروا من الصلاة "، يعني: أن تقصروا من عددها... وقال آخرون: معنى ذلك: لا جناح عليكم أن تقصروا من حدود الصلاة إن خشيتم أن يفتنكم الذين كفروا في صلاتكم» (تفسير الطبري، 1994، سورة النساء، الآية رقم 171).

<sup>49</sup> “The saying, ... فَلَانْ يَضْرِبُ أَحْمَاسًا لِأَسْدَاسٍ [or fifth-day waterings] for the purpose of أسداس [or sixth-day waterings]: i. e., he advances his camels from the خمس to the سدس...”



(أَكْبَادُ الْإِبِلِ إِلَّا ثَلَاثَةَ مَسَاجِدَ), i.e. “camels shall not be ridden, save to three mosques”, etc. (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 1777).

Metonymically, the expression ﴿وَإِذَا صَرْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾, which is represented here by the metonymy of quality, means travelling the world to search or look for something. According to Shanakhnakh (2011), metonymy in ﴿وَإِذَا صَرْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾ means moving from one place to another searching for, or following, something. It may come from hitting the land using an axe... the term “hitting” in this case means searching and exploration.<sup>50</sup>

### **TT1 & TT2:**

Arberry’s (1955) “journeying in the land” and Hilali-Khan’s (1997) “travel in the land” provide English readers with a good equivalent in this context. Both translations opted for direct rendition and this was successful in capturing the essence of the metonymic message, even without echoing the ST in using figurative expressions. The Arabic language, especially the Qur’anic text, is unrivaled in figurative language utilization as noted earlier in this thesis.

Furthermore, Hilali-Khan’s (1997) rendition applied the bracketed explanation technique to identify the addressees (Muslims) because later in the ayah there is an important hukm (a ruling in the Islamic Law) related to shortening the prayer in a certain context (war, for example) to guard against the disbelievers’ attacks.

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meaning, such a one strives to deceive, or circumvent... applied to him who acts towards another with artifice, pretending that he obeys him, or complies with his desire... or to him who pretends one thing while he means another” (Lane, 1997, p 810).

<sup>50</sup> ﴿وَإِذَا صَرْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ...﴾، تنقلتم في أرجائها بجثا، وتتبعها، وتنقبيا عن أمر ما، وقد تكون جاءت من ضرب الفأس، أو السعي للبحث، فيكون الضرب بمعنى البحث والتنقيب». (أسلوب الكناية في القرآن الكريم، الشنخنج، 2011).

#### 7.4.9 The Translation of Metonymy of Quality (كِنَايَةٌ عَنْ صِفَةٍ), in *Surat an-Nisa*,

4:171: ﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ...﴾

#### Example 13

ST:	﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِّنْهُ﴾ سورة النساء-الآية رقم (171)
Arthur Arberry (TT1)	“People of the Book, <b>go not beyond the bounds in your religion</b> , and say not as to God but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. ” [ <i>Surat an-Nisa</i> , 4:171]
Hilali-Khan (TT2)	“O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! <b>Do not exceed the limits in your religion</b> , nor say of Allah aught but the truth. The Messiah 'Iesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah and His Word, ("Be!" - and he was) which He bestowed on Maryam (Mary) and a spirit (Ruh) created by Him”. [ <i>Surat an-Nisa</i> , 4:171]

#### Commentary

The above ayah delivers an important and unmistakable message to the People of the Book (Christians, specifically speaking) regarding their unfounded claim that Jesus, son of Mary, is God’s son. The plain fact is he is not. Jesus is no more than a Messenger of God and His word which He conveyed unto Mary. So, they, i.e. People of the Book, are advised here to stick to this truth and refrain from going beyond the limits.

Morphologically, the trilateral verb (غَلَا) is of the measure (فَعَلَّ) and is generally said of anything to mean it exceeded, or was excessive. It has many other closely-related nouns, including (غُلُوًّا), (مُغَالَاةً), (غَلَاءً), and (غَلِيَانًا). Ibn Manzur (1993) says that (غَلَا) is also said of anything as meaning (رُتَفَعَ), i. e. it rose in degree. The Arabic poet Dhu

al-Rumma ذُو الرُّمَّة (77-117 A.H./ 696-735 C.E.) says<sup>51</sup> **فَمَا زَالَ يَغْلُو حُبُّ مَيَّةَ عِنْدَنَا \*\*\* وَيَزْدَادُ حَتَّى لَمْ نَجِدْ مَا نَزِيدُهَا**, i.e. “*And the love of Meiyeh ceased not to rise in degree with us, and to increase, so that we found not what more we might give to her*”, (Lane’s translation, 1968, p. 2287).

Ibn Manzur (1993) further explains that the noun (الغلاء) signifies exceeding the proper, due, or common, limit in everything... (غَلَا فِي الدِّينِ) occurs when someone acts, or behaves, with strictness, or rigour, in religion, so that he exceeds the limit<sup>52</sup>. Mukhtar Omar (2008) says that the word (غُلُوًّا) means immoderation and exceeding of proper bounds<sup>53</sup>.

In addition, there are other two closely related nouns, which are (مُعَالَاةٌ) and (غَلِيَانٌ). The first, i.e. (مُعَالَاةٌ), refers to the action of going beyond the limits of what is reasonable. The second, i.e. (غَلِيَانٌ), refers to the status of a boiling liquid, or even boiling blood (in the veins of angry people!), as used recently by some Arabic newspapers and media outlets as a metonymy for fury and anger.<sup>54</sup>

Metonymically, this ayah provides the readers with a remarkable metonymic expression, ﴿لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ﴾, represented here by the metonymy of quality, exceptionally utilizing the allegorical power of the term “boiling” to evoke a similar meaning in our minds, but in a different non-physical context. According to al-Tabari

<sup>51</sup> « ويقال للشيء إذا ارتفع: قد غلا؛ قال ذو الرمة: [فَمَا زَالَ يَغْلُو حُبُّ مَيَّةَ عِنْدَنَا \*\*\* وَيَزْدَادُ حَتَّى لَمْ نَجِدْ مَا نَزِيدُهَا] (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).

<sup>52</sup> «أصلُ الغلاء الارتفاعُ ومُجَاوِزَةُ القَدْرِ فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ... وَغَلَا فِي الدِّينِ وَالْأَمْرِ يَغْلُو غُلُوًّا: جَاوَزَ حَدَّهُ» (معجم لسان العرب لجمال الدين ابن منظور، 1993).

<sup>53</sup> «غلا في يغلو، اغل، غلوا، فهو غال، والمفعول مغلو فيه، غلا في الأمر: تشدد فيه حتى جاوز الحد وأفرط» (معجم اللغة العربية المعاصرة لأحمد مختار عمر، 2008).

<sup>54</sup> «جاء معنى الكناية في قوله: ﴿لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ﴾ من غليان الماء، وارتفاعه، ومعناه مجانبة الحق، واتباع الهوى والميل معه». (أسلوب الكناية في القرآن الكريم، الشنخنجي، 2011).

(1994), the word (عُلُو) means exceeding the governing limits.<sup>55</sup> Shanakhnakh (2011) adds that the metonymic expression ﴿لَا تَعْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ﴾ comes from a hot water that rages and rises to the top when it reaches the boiling point. The message here is about leaving the path of moderateness by going beyond or exceeding the limits of the religion.

### **TT1 & TT2:**

Both translations here preserved the context and perspective of the ST, provided good linguistic equivalents, and conveyed the intended metonymic message correctly to the readers without distracting their attention with difficult-to-comprehend renditions. This style of translation may be categorized under communicative translation. According to Newmark (1988), “communicative translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership” (p. 47).

### **7.5 Conclusion**

This chapter began by introducing Surat an-Nisa with a brief background about its ayahs and the context of its revelation, etc. The discussion then moved to investigate and analyze some key metonymic examples in the Surah in terms of contexts, translation strategies, and the extent of metonymic expressions communicability to English readers through translations.

By and large, the English renditions were mostly successful in transferring the meaning literally in what can be described as an exegesis-like translation style, but they were not fully successful in capturing the figurative element, or, specifically speaking, the effect of the metonymic language in the majority of examples.

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<sup>55</sup> «أصلُ "العُلُو" في كل شيء مجاوزة حده الذي هو حده». (تفسير الطبري، 1994، سورة النساء، الآية رقم 171).

Arberry's (1955) style in rendering metonymic expressions differed according to the context and availability of equivalents in the TT. His renditions were sometimes literal as in ﴿أَفَصَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ﴾ and sometimes functional as in ﴿مَنْ الْغَائِطِ﴾. Despite being a native English speaker, he demonstrated a good grasp of the Arabic language, which made his style in rendering Qur'anic texts more elegant and mature.

Hilali-Khan (1997) opted for word-for-word renditions in most cases. However, they applied the "explication" strategy or what can be called the "bracketed additions technique" as an effective translation procedure to explain Qur'anic words or phrases that have no clear equivalent in the English language. They did this, as we can understand from their translation, to guard against confusion or any expected loss of meaning that may accompany the literal rendition.

The conclusion of this chapter is still open because the Holy Qur'an and Surat an-Nisa, still offer many other unique metonymic examples and outstanding allegorical expressions that need careful investigation and thoughtful analysis. This task obviously requires considerable time and effort and I may, God willing, do it in the near future. The following chapter provides a conclusion for the whole thesis.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The primary objective of this thesis was to investigate and highlight the uniqueness of metonymy, as an independent figure of speech, and its remarkable role in communicating the beautiful effect of figurative language in the Holy Qur'an, with special emphasis on Surat an-Nisa. This was combined with exploring the extent of metonymic messages conveyance or communicability to non-Arabic speakers via two selected English translations, as provided by Arthur Arberry (*The Koran Interpreted*, 1955) and Hilali-Khan (*The Noble Qur'an*, 1997).

Special emphasis was placed on Surat an-Nisa in this thesis due to its impressive metonymic examples in different contexts along with its rich dialogues about women, orphans, inheritance, marriage laws, and even tayammum. It contains many metonymic expressions that eloquently and metonymically discuss important family and general life issues like marital intimacy, spousal relationships, monotheism, disbelievers' deep regret in the Hereafter, Allah's justice, death, immigration, and more, all in a beautiful linguistic style using expressive figurative language.

The analytical approach applied throughout this thesis was principally linguistic, so the focus was concentrated on emphasizing the importance of metonymy as an independent figure of speech and the communicability of metonymic messages through the selected English translations. Utilizing examples, this approach demonstrated that metonymy is used primarily to communicate certain allegorical messages, or evoke in mind specific meanings, that may not be conveyable via direct literal language.

This thesis revealed some findings and conclusions that can be summarized in the following points:

In Surat an-Nisa, the strong effect of metonymy, combined with the power of euphemism in some cases, provided an effective linguistic alternative that aimed at conveying the intended meanings without hurting readers' eyes with direct words for sensitive topics, as in ﴿لَا مَسْئَمَةَ الْنِّسَاءِ﴾, or displeasing topics, as in ﴿مَنْ الْأَعَانِطُ﴾, etc.

The two English translations examined in this thesis maintained lexical, semantic, and grammatical equivalences in most cases, but without fully conveying the metonymic function produced by the formal structure of the SL largely due to the uniqueness of some Arabic expressions and linguistic limitations in English.

The style of rendition adopted by both translations in rendering metonymic meanings and rhetorical features of the SL was mostly source-oriented, informative and word-for-word, with the prevalence of formal correspondence technique. Still, some metonymic and allegorical messages in the analyzed examples from Surat an-Nisa, such as ﴿لَا مَسْئَمَةَ الْنِّسَاءِ﴾ and ﴿تَسْوَىٰ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ﴾ were reflected in English translations using good functional equivalents in the TT.

Arberry (1955), as an eminent scholar of Arabic and Islamic studies, revealed a good grasp of the Arabic language, which made his style in rendering Qur'anic text elegant, eloquent, and mature. Hilali-Khan (1997) used the explication strategy/bracketed addition technique as an effective translation method to spell out unclear terms and explain Qur'anic words or phrases that have no clear equivalent in the English language, or whose direct equivalents may lead to confusion or result in a loss of the specific meanings provided by the Qur'anic text.

The overall outcomes of this thesis highlight the question of untranslatability or inimitability of Qur'anic texts, especially when it comes to metonymic expressions that are generally unique to Arab culture. English renditions provided by the two selected translations proved that following an exegesis-like translation style might solve the problem partly (conveying the general meaning) in most settings. However, this comes at the expense of the metonymic effect and eloquence as provided by the SL.

The overall findings of the thesis also suggest that Qur'anic translators need to enhance their linguistic skills and enrich their Arabic language knowledge so that they can understand the message of figurative language and contexts in the Holy Qur'an before embarking on the translation process. This also should be combined with extensive theoretical knowledge in order to choose the correct translation strategy.

Based on the aforementioned findings, the question of translatability of metonymy in the general Qur'anic text still requires further consideration and research. This thesis does not claim to have carried out a comprehensive study of this subject area because the main focus was limited to introducing metonymy as an independent figure of speech and analyzing the translation of some metonymically laden expressions in selected ayahs from the Holy Qur'an, with special emphasis on Surat an-Nisa.



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## **Vita**

Alaa G. Muhammad was born in Egypt. He was educated in local public schools and graduated from Al Azhar University in Cairo. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in English/Arabic Translation and Interpreting (2007). Alaa has accumulated over nine years of practical experience in translation at multinational and government agencies in Egypt and the UAE. He currently works as a Senior Translator at Dubai Government. He joined the Master of Arts in (English/Arabic/English) Translation and Interpreting (MATI) program at the American University of Sharjah in Fall 2014.