The Meanings of the Inimitable Quran: A Critical Study

Muzaffar Iqbal

This critical study examines Gibril Fouad Haddad's *The Meanings of the Inimitable Quran: A Lection-Based Rendering in English*,[1] with particular attention to its sustained engagement with al-Bayḍāwī and its distinctive attempt to make the semantic plurality of the canonical readings available in English. Through a continuous reading of Juzʾ 30, the study asks what happens when meanings recovered through lexicography, tafsīr, grammatical analysis, and *qirāʾāt* enter the translated line. It distinguishes the scholarly provenance of a rendering from what that rendering communicates within the receiving language, arguing that exegetical warrant alone does not establish translational success.

Haddad's strongest passages demonstrate that close attention to Qurʾānic form and exegetical tradition can produce economical and powerful English, while other choices allow etymology, commentary, or canonical plurality to become more visible than the meanings they were intended to convey. The study argues for a double discipline of hearing and restraint: translation informed by tafsīr must know more than it says, so that scholarly understanding completes its passage into English rather than requiring the reader to reconstruct it.

Keywords: al-Bayḍāwī; canonical readings; Gibril Fouad Haddad; *The Meanings of the Inimitable Quran*; *qirāʾāt*; Qurʾān translation; receiving language; tafsīr; translation theory.

The Meanings of the Inimitable Quran: A Lection-Based Rendering in English is an ambitious addition to the long history of attempts to convey the message of the Qurʾān in English. Its distinctive undertaking within a field already

[1.] Gibril Fouad Haddad, The Meanings of the Inimitable Quran: A Lection-Based Rendering in English, Abu Zahra Press, Keighley, West Yorkshire, pp. 684, 2022.

Islamic Sciences, Vol. 19 (Summer 2026) No. 1
ISSN 1929-9435 (Print) • ISSN 1929-9443 (Online)

©2026 by the Center for Islamic Sciences

Islamic Sciences, Vol. 19 (Summer 2026), No. 1.indb 7 10/31/2026 5:53:44 AM

comprising some 135 previous English renderings[2] is to make some of the semantic plurality of the canonical readings available within the English rendering itself. Haddad describes the work as "a rendering of the meanings of the inimitable Qurʾān based on the commentary on the Qurʾān entitled *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Taʾwīl* . . . . More to the point of the method cited in the subtitle of the present translation, Bayḍāwī's approach is variant-inclusive and lection-based."

The undertaking begins with an acknowledgment of the limits of translation: the Qurʾān is the revealed Arabic text in its "untranslatable inimitability," possessing an "otherworldly flow and cadence," "crushing concision," and "overwhelming emotion." "No translation can do it justice beyond beginning to serve to reflect—and hoping to result from—a lifelong interaction with the original." This acknowledgment establishes a demanding standard for the work that follows. For the reader without Arabic, the English rendering is the principal means through which the meanings, movement, and force of the Qurʾānic discourse become accessible. The central question is therefore not only how much of the Arabic stands behind Haddad's English, but what the English itself communicates to the reader who cannot see behind it.

Haddad's method responds to this difficulty by holding together two obligations which he finds exemplified in Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī's Persian rendering of the Qurʾān: *ad litteram*, remaining close to the Qurʾānic word count and syntax; and *ad sensum*, seeking "intelligibility, fluency and clarity" even when the word count must rise. Al-Bayḍāwī's "constant highlighting" of the *aṣl* of words and phrases, Haddad writes, anticipated the first of these duties; accordingly, his translation attempts to follow the Qurʾānic "part of speech, word count and word order among other aspects of the letter of the original text." To these two duties Haddad adds partial coverage of the canonical reading variants, which together, he

2. In his *The Quran Beheld* (2022), Nuh Ha Mim Keller reports that Ahmad Khan—who was preparing a survey of English translations from George Sale's 1734 rendering through the end of 2021—had assembled "some 135 works," excluding partial translations and translations made from languages other than Arabic (p. xiv). See also my review of Keller: *The Quran Beheld*, *Islamic Sciences* 16, no. 1 (Summer 2023): 59–70, https://jis.cis-ca.org/jis/article/view/219/218.

An earlier detailed survey by Bruce B. Lawrence, *The Koran in English: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), provides an independent indication of the rapid growth of the field: Lawrence lists sixty English renderings from the twentieth century and forty-five from 2000 through 2015.

writes, "epitomize concise and cohesive polysemy." Haddad describes the work as "not a comprehensive review of all the 10-lection variants," but as documenting "a representative sampling" of those that entail a change in meaning. Where such differences occur, he may incorporate the resulting meanings into the translated line, sometimes separating alternatives by a slash: thus Q 21:4 becomes "say/he said," while at Q 84:19 "[pl./sing.]" marks a difference in the form of address.

These principles make the translation an unusually deliberate undertaking in drawing tafsīr, *qirāʾāt*, and features of Qurʾānic form into the work of English translation. They also create tensions that can only be judged in the resulting English. Fidelity to Arabic word order may conflict with English fluency; an exegetically warranted expansion may cease to be distinguishable from the words being translated; and two meanings separately available through canonical readings may not remain equally intelligible when combined in a single English sentence. Haddad himself provides a particularly useful criterion for judging such choices elsewhere: the Arabic authority behind an English expression does not settle what that expression communicates to an English reader. His objection to rendering *al-rūḥ al-qudus* as "The Holy Spirit" is precisely that the English expression carries theological associations that the Arabic expression does not.[3] The same test must therefore be applied to his own rendering.

This article examines the entirety of Juzʾ 30 (pp. 607–673) as a delimited field within which Haddad's undertaking may be assessed. It does not reproduce or comment upon the entire translation of these suras. Rather, the examples discussed below emerge from a continuous reading of the whole juzʾ and include instances in which Haddad's method produces effective and illuminating English as well as those in which the resulting English raises questions of intelligibility, semantic precision, or translational method.

Hearing the English

The consequences of these methodological choices become clearest when the translation is read continuously. Juzʾ 30 provides a particularly useful testing

3. Gibril Fouad Haddad, "Follow-up on the Study Quran, Perennialism, and Joseph Lumbard's Claims" (2017), 5. Haddad argues that although *al-rūḥ al-muqaddas* is used by al-Zamakhsharī and al-Rāzī, the English expression "The Holy Spirit" carries Christian connotations for most English readers that the Arabic expression does not.

https://www.academia.edu/31316434/Followup_on_the_Study_Quran_Perennialism_and_Joseph_Lumbards_claims.

ground: its generally short suras include some of the most familiar passages of the Qurʾān, their compression places unusual demands upon translation, and their rhetorical force often depends upon relations among words that cannot be judged in isolation. Read in sequence, Haddad's rendering also makes clear that closeness to Qurʾānic form need not produce defective English. At a number of points, his refusal to explain what the Qurʾān leaves open is precisely what allows the translation to succeed.

Sūrat al-Masad offers a compact example. "*Perish the hands of Abū Lahab—and he has perished!*" preserves the formal relation between invocation and accomplished fact with remarkable economy. "*What he earned*" similarly resists the temptation to insert one of the exegetical possibilities preserved by al-Bayḍāwī, while "*wood-carrier*" leaves available more than one way of understanding the expression. Here al-Bayḍāwī's exegetical possibilities inform the translation without entering its English. The translator knows more than the translation says, and the English gains from what has been withheld.

The same restraint appears much earlier in the juzʾ. At the close of Sūrat al-Nabaʾ, Haddad does not pour al-Bayḍāwī's several identifications of "*the Spirit*" into the translated line: "*The Day the Spirit stands, and the angels in rows*" is allowed to stand with its referent unexplained. Nor does he insert the several explanations al-Bayḍāwī records for the final wish, "*O would that I were dust!*" In such passages the translation preserves an openness that the commentary properly explores but the translated line need not resolve.

Unfamiliar English cannot therefore by itself constitute an objection. The question is not whether Haddad knows what the Arabic means. The evidence repeatedly shows that he does. Nor is the question simply whether his English is strange. The question is what the strangeness does.

Sūrat al-Nāziʿāt makes the distinction unusually clear. Haddad's "*the sleepless land*" for *al-sāhira* is initially unfamiliar, but al-Bayḍāwī records explanations connecting the word with the surface of the earth and with wakefulness, including the observation that one who is upon it does not sleep. The strangeness therefore opens toward something in the Arabic as heard through al-Bayḍāwī. When Allah Most High brings forth the morning brightness, Haddad's "*and extracted its morning light*" is likewise conspicuously unusual English, yet the image remains apprehensible: light is brought out from what concealed it. Nothing has to be mentally translated into a second English sentence before the reader can see what is happening. Here unfamiliarity makes the reader stop within an image rather than outside the sentence trying to reconstruct it.

But unusual English can also do something quite different. In the same

sura those who deny resurrection exclaim, "*That, then, is a losing recharge!*" "Recharge" introduces an electrical semantic world for which al-Bayḍāwī supplies no warrant. The word is strange because the English has supplied an image of its own disconnected from the Qurʾān semantics. Then, near the close, we have, "*They ask you about the Hour, O when is its anchorage?*" Here, once again, the word has a different genealogy. Al-Bayḍāwī explains *mursāhā* through the point at which something comes to rest, drawing upon the language of a ship being brought to its mooring. Haddad's "*anchorage*" therefore uses an exegetical metaphor easily flattened in translation; the resulting English remains difficult for a reader who does not know the exegetical route by which it was reached. "*Recharge*," "*sleepless land*," "*extracted its morning light*," and "*anchorage*" are all departures from predictable English, but they do not all depart from it in the same way.

Elsewhere philological information survives at the expense of the thing the philology was meant to explain. Al-Bayḍāwī connects al-zabāniya with zabn, thrusting or pushing, but explains them as those who will drag the transgressor into the Fire. Haddad turns the etymology into their English name: "the Shovers." The philology has survived; the terror has not. In Sūrat ʿAbasa, qaḍban, fresh fodder in al-Bayḍāwī's explanation and named from its repeated cutting, becomes "hewn bundles." Something of the cutting has survived, but the thing being cut has become difficult to recognize.

Sūrat al-Falaq presents a related difficulty. Al-Bayḍāwī begins with the act of cleaving but arrives at dawn; Haddad stops at the act of cleaving: "*the nurturing Lord of the cleaving*." Nothing obscure in al-Bayḍāwī requires "*darkful*"; he describes a night of intense darkness whose darkness enters everything. Here the unusualness belongs more evidently to the English than to a difficulty inherent in the meaning.

Other expressions make the problem audible in different ways: "*gratified life*," "*motherly home*," "*weighty goods*," "*fond keeping*," "*faith-system of the most upright*," "*Eternally-Besought*," "*All-Relenting*." At times, the English intended to make meanings accessible to a reader without Arabic is less immediately intelligible than al-Bayḍāwī's explanation of the Arabic itself. Yet even these expressions cannot all be judged in the same way. Some preserve an etymological feature; some create an unfamiliar collocation; some activate an established English association that redirects the meaning; some compress an exegetical determination into what appears to be a lexical equivalent.

The distinction matters because Haddad himself demonstrates another possibility. In Sūrat al-Takwīr, "*When the sun is wound up*" retains the governing image of *takwīr* without importing al-Bayḍāwī's explanations into the line. When the sky is *kushiṭat*, al-Bayḍāwī explains the verb through the

stripping of a hide from a slaughtered animal; Haddad gives simply, "*when the sky is stripped away*." Most strikingly, *wa-l-ṣubḥi idhā tanaffasa* becomes "*and the dawn when it breathes forth!*" Al-Bayḍāwī explains the spreading of morning light through an image of breath, but the translation does not explain the image. It allows the image to become English. The strangeness gives rather than withholds.

Haddad's English must therefore be heard before it is classified. Some unfamiliar expressions preserve an image that smoother English might erase; some preserve linguistic information while obscuring what that information was meant to disclose; some activate associations belonging to English rather than to the Arabic; and some allow exegetical learning to disappear into remarkably economical translation. The question is not how much Arabic can be traced behind an English expression, but what happens to what Haddad has heard in the Arabic when it becomes English.

When Exegesis Becomes Translation

Exegetical selection produces another difficulty. Al-Bayḍāwī preserves two explanations of Laylat al-Qadr: its exalted honor and the determination of affairs within it; al-Rāghib, treating the word lexically, explains this occurrence as a night appointed for particular affairs. Haddad's "*Night of worth*" does not merely select one exegetical possibility. Repeated through the opening three verses and placed in the sura title itself, it makes that selection appear to the English reader to be the meaning of *al-qadr*. The translation has turned an exegetical choice into a lexical definition.

Titles can intensify the effect. "*Superabundance*" for al-Kawthar, "*Absoluteness*" for al-Ikhlāṣ, and "*The Last Part of the Day*" for al-ʿAṣr do more than orient the reader. "*Absoluteness*" does not translate the title so much as replace it with an abstraction distilled from the theology of the sura. The problem becomes particularly clear when the route by which an exegete reaches a meaning enters the translated line. In Sūrat ʿAbasa, among the foods Allah Most High causes the earth to produce, Haddad gives "*grapes, and hewn bundles*" for *wa-ʿinaban wa-qaḍban* (Q 80:28). Al-Bayḍāwī identifies *qaḍban* as fresh fodder and then explains the designation etymologically: it is named from *qaḍabahu*, cutting it, because it is cut repeatedly. "*Hewn bundles*" appears to preserve something of the cutting contained in that explanation, but the thing being explained has become difficult to recognize. The etymology has survived; the referent has not.

At this point al-Bayḍāwī is doing something different from what an English translation must do. His reader already possesses the Qurʾānic word *qaḍban*. The exegete can identify its referent, trace its designation to an act

of cutting, report alternatives, and explain why the word bears the meaning it does. The reader of an English rendering of the Qurʾān who does not know Arabic stands in a different relation to the verse. He does not come to the translation possessing *qaḍban* and asking why it means what it means. He needs the translation to make available what the Qurʾānic expression signifies. Tafsīr explains how meaning is present in the Qurʾānic text; translation must make that meaning available in another language. The first task cannot simply be carried over as the method of the second.

The distinction does not mean that al-Bayḍāwī should recede from the translator's act of understanding. Quite the reverse. Without his explanation the translator may never discover what an expression contains. The question arises afterward: what must happen to that understanding before it becomes English? Preserving the linguistic feature through which an exegete reaches a meaning is not necessarily the same as preserving the meaning reached through that feature.

The distinction is visible elsewhere in Juzʾ 30. In Q 99, "*weighty goods*" preserves al-Bayḍāwī's lexical gloss of *athqāl* while obscuring what he says the earth actually brings forth: its buried treasures or its dead. Al-Bayḍāwī's lexical gloss has reached the English; what the gloss was explaining has not. In Q 114 the translation becomes less precise than the philological explanation supplied on the same page. Al-Bayḍāwī explains *al-waswās* first as "the whispering," but immediately specifies that what is intended is the whisperer, named by his act for intensification; Haddad's footnote reproduces that explanation. His translation nevertheless turns the whisperer back into "*the whisper*," and then requires the whisper itself to whisper.

The same process can operate through syntax and semantic relation rather than etymology. Near the opening of Sūrat ʿAbasa, Haddad renders wa-mā yudrīka laʿallahu yazzakkā as "And what shall make you know? He might purify himself." Other English renderings vary considerably in their handling of wa-mā yudrīka, but the awkwardness here is not required by the Arabic. Al-Bayḍāwī explains the expression as wa-ayyu shayʾin yajʿaluka dāriyan bi-ḥālihi: what thing would make you aware of his condition? Haddad's "what shall make you know?" thus has a recognizable relation not merely to the Qurʾānic yudrīka, but to the language through which al-Bayḍāwī explains it: yajʿaluka dāriyan. Yet al-Bayḍāwī's explanatory sentence is itself clearer about what is to be known than the English rendering. The commentary has not rescued a difficult expression; it has exposed the possible route by which an unnecessary difficulty entered the translation.

Later in the same sura, Haddad gives "*the all-hearing crier*" for *al-ṣākhkha*. Al-Bayḍāwī explains the word as the blast, described thus because people

are deafened by it. The semantic force runs from the cry toward those whose hearing it overwhelms. "*All-hearing crier*" naturally reverses that relation: in English the crier appears to be the one who hears all. Here the difficulty is not that the translator has ignored the exegetical explanation. It arises at the point where what has been understood through that explanation is made to assume an English form.

Other instances show a different kind of narrowing. In Q 85, "*He*" personalizes *shāhid*, while the verbal "*what he witnesses*" converts *mashhūd* from the witnessed into the object of that particular witness's witnessing. The result is considerably narrower than the Arabic as al-Bayḍāwī hears it. In Q 93, al-Bayḍāwī preserves two senses of *ḍāllan*: absence of knowledge subsequently imparted through revelation, and literal loss on the road. Haddad's "*lost … guided*" conveys neither distinction clearly; the English pairing naturally suggests spiritual lostness followed by guidance. Later in the same sura, "*Do not be forceful*" turns a prohibition against exercising power over the vulnerable into advice about one's manner. Al-Bayḍāwī makes the relation concrete: do not overpower the orphan regarding his property because of his weakness.

The Arabic and al-Bayḍāwī can therefore explain why Haddad wrote the English; they cannot thereby establish what the English communicates. In Q 107, al-Bayḍāwī's alternatives are immediately intelligible: the man denies the Recompense or Islam. Haddad's "*belies the faith-system*" is more unusual than either possibility and less capable of communicating either one. In successful passages, al-Bayḍāwī deepens Haddad's English; in unsuccessful ones, al-Bayḍāwī is required to decipher it.

Haddad's rendering cannot be judged merely by asking whether an Arabic word can be traced to the English word placed beneath it, or whether an exegetical authority can be produced in support of an unusual choice. Such evidence is indispensable, but it establishes provenance, not achievement. The achievement occurs only when what has been understood in Arabic becomes available, within the possibilities and limitations of English, to someone who does not possess the Arabic.

Rendering *dīn*, *balad*, *tawwāb*, *ṣamad*, or *kufr* is therefore never simply the solution of a local lexical puzzle. The English chosen begins to construct a vocabulary through which the reader gradually learns the Qurʾān. A translation can clarify a word locally while obscuring the Qurʾān's own lexical architecture globally. The cumulative consistency of a translation matters, but consistency in an English equivalent is not necessarily fidelity when the Arabic word acts differently in different contexts. This is especially visible with *dīn*. "*Faith-system*" may have been intended to preserve the breadth of

a term that cannot always be reduced to "religion," "faith," "judgment," or "recompense." Yet its recurrence gives the English rendering a technical expression that the reader must learn even where the context or al-Bayḍāwī supplies something much more immediate. In Q 107:1, the exegetical possibilities are the Recompense and Islam; in Q 109:6, the concluding *lakum dīnukum wa-liya dīn* belongs to a direct declaration of separation between what the addressees worship and what the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, worships. "*To you your faith-system and to me mine*" turns that declaration into the vocabulary of comparative classification. The translation has sought to preserve breadth through a technical term, but the technical term itself now stands between the reader and each particular act of meaning.

In Q 108:3, the Prophet's *shāniʾ*—the one who hates him—is described as *al-abtar*, the one cut off. Haddad's "*your vilifier*" changes the relation before reaching the predicate. Al-Bayḍāwī's *shāniʾ* hates; Haddad's "*vilifier*" speaks. "*Vilifier*" is not meaningless, and hostility may indeed issue in vilification, but the English has converted an inward relation of hatred into a particular verbal act. Such changes can be almost invisible precisely because the resulting English remains perfectly grammatical.

What emerges from these cases is not a distinction between translation informed by tafsīr and translation somehow independent of it. The work of understanding a verse through tafsīr and the work of translating its meanings for a reader who does not possess the Arabic are related acts, but they are not the same act. The exegete may disclose the route by which a word means, the alternatives it can bear, the grammatical relation upon which an interpretation depends, or the transmitted readings through which another meaning becomes available. Translation begins from that understanding but cannot end there. What has been learned through the exegete must undergo a further transformation before it becomes meaning available in another language.

The same problem appears at a more consequential level in Haddad's treatment of the Divine Name. He ordinarily renders *Allah* as "the One God." The theological truth of the expression is not in question: Allah is One. But a true predication concerning the Named is not thereby equivalent to the Name itself. The distinction becomes visible within the Qurʾān. At Q 2:163, *wa-ilāhukum ilāhun wāḥidun* is rendered, *"And the God of you all is One God, there is no god but He…."* Here "One God" has an exact Qurʾānic basis: *ilāhun wāḥidun*. The Qurʾān itself predicates Oneness. Yet in the immediately surrounding verses the proper Name *Allah* is also repeatedly rendered "the One God." The Name and the proposition consequently

converge in English.

Al-Bayḍāwī, Haddad's principal exegetical guide, makes the distinction especially clear. Commenting on Q 2:163, he treats *ilāhun wāḥidun* as a genuine predicative expression: the One entitled to worship is one and has no partner, while *lā ilāha illā huwa* confirms that Oneness. The point is not that al-Bayḍāwī is discussing the translation of *Allah*—he is not. It is that his analysis preserves the different semantic work performed by naming and predication. *Allah* and *ilāhun wāḥidun* have the same Divine referent, but they do not therefore perform the same linguistic work. One names; the other describes and predicates.

The consequence can be heard with particular clarity in Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ. *Allāhu aḥad* becomes *"The One God. One."* The translation has already placed Divine Oneness inside its rendering of the Name, leaving *aḥad* to state again what "the One God" has just said. Al-Bayḍāwī's analysis moves in the opposite direction. *Allah*, he writes, indicates all the Attributes of Perfection, while *aḥad* indicates the comprehensive sum of the Attributes of Majesty. The semantic work is distributed: the Qurʾān names and then predicates.

The next verse makes the effect still more revealing. *Allāhu l-Ṣamad* is rendered *"ALLAH, the Eternally-Besought."* The proper Name returns, now allowing the following expression to predicate something of the One named. Al-Bayḍāwī himself pauses over the repetition of *Allah* in the sūra and assigns significance to it. The contrast between the two English verses therefore exposes an internal pressure within Haddad's method. When *Allah* becomes "the One God," explanation has entered the lexical position of the Name; when *Allah* is allowed to remain *Allah*, the predicate that follows can perform its own work.

This is not simply a dispute over whether an Arabic word should be retained in English. It is another instance of the larger translational question encountered throughout this rendering: what happens when something learned through tafsīr is placed inside the translated expression itself? In this case the inserted meaning is unquestionably true. But truth of explanation does not by itself establish equivalence in translation. The Qurʾān may give the Name and then disclose something of the Named; a translation that builds one such disclosure into the Name has already interpreted the expression before the rest of the verse can speak.[4]

4. For a more extensive examination of this question within the larger contexts of the Divine Name, Qurʾānic semantics, and English as a receiving language, including a fuller discussion of Haddad's rendering of *Allah* as "the One God," see Muzaffar Iqbal, "The Name and the Named: Allah or God," *Islamic Sciences* 18, no. 1 (Summer 2025): 16–83, esp. 64–74.

The Life of Words in English

The alteration can announce itself through marked vocabulary. Q 95:6 promises those who believe and perform righteous deeds *ajrun ghayru mamnūn*, rendered "*a wage unsevered*." The reader can perhaps reconstruct "a reward that will not be cut off," but "wage" brings the contractual world of remuneration while "unsevered" asks English to carry an Arabic image in a collocation it does not naturally possess. Q 92 similarly gives "*the wariest*" and one who "*remits his wealth*"; Q 87 gives "*the wretcheder*." Each can be defended by pointing to morphology or lexical range. Yet morphological information is not the same thing as communicated meaning. The superlative or comparative form may have survived while the human quality it names has become less recognizable.

The English lexicon of the translation deserves consideration as a whole. The issue is not that an average reader must already know every word. A serious translation can enlarge its reader's vocabulary. Nor is frequency itself decisive: an uncommon word may be exactly right. The question is whether the unfamiliar expression rewards the act of learning it by bringing the reader closer to the Arabic expression, or whether learning the English merely teaches the reader the translator's private solution. "*Coursers*" can be looked up; but discovering that a courser may be a swift horse does not restore the continuous charge al-Bayḍāwī hears. "*Besought*" can be looked up; but its dictionary definition does not readily disclose the relation of absolute dependence embodied in *al-Ṣamad*. "*Darkful*" can be deciphered without a dictionary at all; what remains unexplained is why ordinary English "dark" was insufficient for the intense darkness al-Bayḍāwī describes.

Yet unfamiliarity itself remains an inadequate criterion. Sūrat al-Nāziʿāt brings several unusual expressions into close proximity while revealing that they do not behave alike. "*That, then, is a losing recharge!*" introduces an electrical association absent from the Arabic and from al-Bayḍāwī's explanation. "*The sleepless land*," by contrast, preserves something of the exegetical association between *al-sāhira* and wakefulness. "*And extracted its morning light*" is unusual but immediately imaginable: the English reader can see light being brought forth from concealment. "*Anchorage*" for the Hour restores the mooring metaphor within *mursāhā*, although the resulting English makes greater demands upon a reader who does not know the metaphor's genealogy. The question is therefore not whether Haddad's English is strange. The question is what the strangeness does.

The receiving language can also reverse a relation while every word remains recognizable. In Sūrat ʿAbasa, "the all-hearing crier" gives the English reader an agent endowed with extraordinary hearing. Al-Bayḍāwī's

explanation of *al-ṣākhkha* moves in the opposite direction: the blast is so overwhelming that it deafens those who hear it. The Arabic directs force from the cry toward the hearer; the English adjective appears to relocate the hearing within the crier. Later in the same sura, "a life-and-death matter is enough" imports an established English idiom into a verse al-Bayḍāwī explains simply as each person having a concern sufficient to occupy him. In one case an English construction reverses a semantic relation; in the other an English idiom supplies a relation of its own.

The same problem can occur without conspicuous strangeness. "*Fond keeping*" appears to preserve something of the Arabic etymology, but in English it has become an English expression with associations of its own. Al-Bayḍāwī preserves *al-māʿūn* as *zakāt* or the ordinary things people lend one another. Haddad's "*lend a helping hand*" sounds exceptionally natural in English precisely because the established idiom no longer means lending anything. Transparent English can redirect meaning as effectively as obscure English can withhold it.

Haddad's Introduction emphasizes the "otherworldly flow and cadence," "crushing concision," and "overwhelming emotion" of the Qurʾān. Those qualities cannot be reproduced by lexical correspondence alone because they occur through sequences, contrasts, repetitions, suspensions, sounds, images, and sudden turns. The translator must therefore listen for what each word contains and for what the passage is doing to its hearer. Every individual expression may be defensible, while the Qurʾānic event they collectively constitute is lost.

Sūrat al-Qāriʿa demonstrates the problem through eschatological reversal. The one whose scales are heavy enters a life of contentment; the one whose scales are light finds his abode in *al-Hāwiya*. The movement is stark and terrifying. "*He basks in a gratified life*" and "*his motherly home is an endless abyss*" add lexical and interpretive texture, but they also make the English reader pause over the translator's expressions precisely where the Qurʾānic discourse is carrying him toward the final disclosure: *nārun ḥāmiya*, a fiercely burning Fire. Lexical information can become rhetorical loss when the English reader is given something contained in a word but loses the image or movement for which that information mattered.

Haddad repeatedly renders forms of *ṣ-l-y* with "*roast*" or "*roasting*" (Q 82:15; 83:16; 84:12; 88:4; 92:15; 111:3). The problem lies not in whether "roast" can denote exposure to great heat, but in what the word brings with it into English. If a word momentarily changes the imaginative world of a passage, the loss cannot be measured by consulting its dictionary senses alone. English speakers encounter "roast" overwhelmingly within a culinary

semantic field. The Qurʾānic threat has therefore not simply been rendered with an uncommon equivalent; it has entered an unintended network of associations. The Fire of Hell has entered English as an oven.

The unintended association can also be theological. Placed together in Q 93, "*lost … guided*" naturally activates the familiar religious opposition between spiritual lostness and guidance, although neither of al-Bayḍāwī's explanations requires it. "*All-Relenting*" creates a related problem: "relenting" describes one who becomes less severe or abandons resistance, whereas al-Bayḍāwī describes the constancy of Divine acceptance. An English word does not arrive empty merely because one of its dictionary senses can be made to correspond to something in the Arabic.

There is fidelity to information, and there is fidelity to encounter. Haddad is exceptionally attentive to the former. His rendering frequently preserves morphological, etymological, grammatical, exegetical, and canonical information that another translation might leave unrepresented. Yet the preservation of information can sometimes impede the encounter for whose sake the information matters. The reader may know more about the word while receiving less of what the verse does with it.

No English translation can reproduce the Qurʾān's inimitability; Haddad himself begins from that acknowledgment. Translation begins under loss. But acknowledgment of inevitable loss does not make the kinds of loss indistinguishable. Some arise because Arabic possesses resources English cannot reproduce. Others arise from choices made within English among available possibilities. Still others arise because the translator has attempted to preserve a feature whose formal survival costs more than its semantic or rhetorical yield. The critic's task is to distinguish these losses carefully.

Al-Bayḍāwī has proved an exacting control for Haddad's experiment. He repeatedly prevents an easy criticism. What initially appears arbitrary often turns out to have a precise exegetical genealogy. "*The Shovers*" is not whimsical; "*the Cleaving*" is not uninformed; "*fond keeping*" is not careless; "*the Eternally-Besought*" is not produced by ignorance of *al-Ṣamad*. Their provenance frequently reveals a translator listening very closely indeed. But that discovery does not end the inquiry. It begins its decisive stage.

The Receiving Language

Translation does not end when an Arabic expression has been assigned an English equivalent. The chosen word enters another language, where it encounters established collocations, registers, images, idioms, theological resonances, emotional coloring, and histories of use. These are not accidental

additions to meaning. They are among the means by which meaning becomes available to a reader. An English rendering must therefore be judged not only by the Arabic and exegetical authority standing behind it, but by what the resulting English expression has become within the receiving language.

Haddad himself supplies a particularly exact statement of this principle in his criticism of "The Holy Spirit" as a rendering of *al-rūḥ al-qudus*. His objection is not that the expression lacks Arabic scholarly precedent. He explicitly notes the use of *al-rūḥ al-muqaddas* by al-Zamakhsharī and al-Rāzī. His objection is that "The Holy Spirit" carries Christian theological associations for most English readers which the Arabic expression does not. The Arabic provenance of an expression, in other words, cannot by itself determine its suitability in English. The receiving language has entered the judgment.

That principle reaches considerably beyond the particular theological case for which Haddad invokes it. If "The Holy Spirit" must be judged by what it communicates to an English reader rather than merely by what can be established behind it in Arabic, so must his "*country*," "*recharge*," "*roast*," "*motherly home*," "*faith-system*," "*the Shovers*," and "*the Eternally-Besought*." The historical or exegetical pedigree of an English choice establishes why the translator made it. It does not establish what the reader receives from it. Provenance is not reception. The distinction is easily obscured for a reader who knows Arabic. Such a reader sees "*country*" at *balad* and may silently restore "land," "city," "territory," or Makkah according to context. He sees "*the Eternally-Besought*" and supplies from his knowledge of *al-Ṣamad* the meanings the English expression does not immediately yield. He encounters an unusual syntax and reconstructs the Arabic order behind it. The scholar can unconsciously repair the translation while reading it. The reader for whom the translation is intended cannot.

This difference becomes especially important when an English expression is independently familiar. In Q 90 Haddad's "*this country*" and in Q 95 his "*this trusted Country*" may appear straightforward. Yet "country" in contemporary English ordinarily denotes a nation or sovereign territorial state. The Qurʾānic *balad* carries no such necessary political sense. Capitalizing "Country" does not remove the association; it may intensify it. An English word may therefore be perfectly intelligible and still misdirect the reader precisely because its intelligibility comes from a semantic world different from the one required by the Arabic.

The same principle explains why natural English is not by itself the goal. Haddad's "*lend a helping hand*" is immediately idiomatic English, but the idiom means to assist rather than to lend an object of ordinary use.

Conversely, unusual English may succeed precisely because it permits an unfamiliar Qurʾānic image to remain unfamiliar without becoming unintelligible. "*And the dawn when it breathes forth!*" is not an ordinary English description of daybreak. It should not be. The Arabic image itself is extraordinary. Yet an English reader can inhabit the image without knowing the Arabic verb or consulting al-Bayḍāwī. The dawn breathes; the image lives.

The distinction can be stated more precisely. Strangeness succeeds when the English itself gives the reader the means to inhabit it; it fails when knowledge of the Arabic is required to reconstruct what the strange English was supposed to mean. "*The dawn breathes forth*" asks the reader to imagine. "*A losing recharge*" asks him to decipher. "*The sleepless land*" preserves an image whose relation to wakefulness can still be apprehended. "*Hewn bundles*" withholds the fresh fodder whose repeated cutting generated the designation. The question is not whether the translation domesticates or foreignizes the Qurʾān. It is whether the unfamiliarity belongs to what is being translated or has been produced by the translation.

This is why formal closeness requires judgment rather than mechanical preservation. Haddad's attempt to remain near Qurʾānic word order can sometimes produce an English sequence whose relations remain perceptible. Elsewhere the English reader receives the order without receiving the relation the order expressed. Q 87 provides a small example in "*We shall facilitate you unto ease*." The Arabic relation between the verb and *al-yusrā* is recoverable, but the English construction is sufficiently unusual that the reader first encounters the translator's syntax. Formal correspondence has remained visible while semantic access has become less immediate.

The problem becomes more consequential when compression is involved. The Qurʾān can place immense semantic and rhetorical pressure upon a small number of Arabic words because those words operate within a language whose morphology, syntax, sound, and inherited usage make that compression possible. English concision achieved by preserving the same number or sequence of lexical units does not necessarily preserve Qurʾānic concision. It may instead remove relations that Arabic grammar supplied. Concision in the source and brevity in the translation are not identical achievements.

Sūrat al-Takwīr provides an illuminating control because Haddad repeatedly allows English to absorb exegetical understanding without displaying the process by which he reached it. Al-Bayḍāwī explains *kuwwirat* through the winding of a turban and then records what that image may signify when applied to the sun. Haddad gives "*When the sun is wound up*."

At *kushiṭat*, al-Bayḍāwī evokes the stripping of a hide from a slaughtered animal; Haddad gives "*when the sky is stripped away*." The English contains the result of exegetical learning without requiring the reader to retrace it. Bayḍāwī is behind the English, not inside it.

The principle extends beyond individual words and clauses to the rhetorical event constituted by a passage. A reader does not receive a translation as a set of independently defensible lexical decisions. He receives sentences, sequences, images, accelerations, repetitions, and closures. The relevant question is therefore not merely whether each English expression can be justified by Arabic lexicography or tafsīr, but whether the expressions together allow the passage to happen in English.

This does not require English to sound as though the Qurʾān had originally been composed in English. Such a criterion would erase precisely the difference translation must preserve. Nor does it require the suppression of Qurʾānic syntax, imagery, or semantic density whenever these disturb ordinary English usage. The receiving language is not sovereign over the source. But neither is it inert material upon which the forms of another language can simply be impressed. Translation takes place in the encounter between them.

The translator's responsibility is consequently double even before the canonical readings are considered. He must refuse the easy fluency that substitutes familiar English for what the Arabic actually says; and he must refuse a formal fidelity that leaves the reader with traces of Arabic structures from which meaning must still be reconstructed. Between domestication and replication lies the harder work of making what has been understood in one language genuinely available in another.

This is also why the simplest English may represent the deepest scholarship. A translator may spend hours determining the referent of a word, distinguishing grammatical possibilities, tracing an etymology, weighing transmitted interpretations, and deciding among lexical alternatives, only to conclude that the most faithful English is an ordinary word or a short phrase. The labor has not disappeared because its apparatus is absent from the line. The simple phrase may be the terminus of the more learned act.

Haddad's strongest passages repeatedly demonstrate this. The reader of "*what he earned*," "*when the sky is stripped away*," or "*and the dawn when it breathes forth!*" is not given less scholarship because the scholarship is unobtrusive. He is given scholarship that has completed its passage into English. Al-Bayḍāwī has enabled the translator to hear more precisely; the English has then been permitted to speak in its own language. The distinction will become even more exacting when the translator attempts

to carry not merely exegetical plurality but the semantic plurality of the canonical readings into a single English rendering. For there the question is no longer only what one Arabic expression can become in English, but what happens when more than one canonically transmitted form is asked to enter the same English line.

When Plurality Enters English

Haddad's most distinctive contribution to English Qurʾān translation lies in his attempt to make something of the semantic plurality of the canonical readings available within the rendering itself. The undertaking deserves to be distinguished from ordinary exegetical plurality. When al-Bayḍāwī records several possible referents, grammatical analyses, or interpretations of the same transmitted wording, the translator must decide how much of that plurality belongs in the translated line. A canonical variant has a different textual status. More than one transmitted form belongs to the Qurʾānic reading tradition, and a difference between them may produce a difference in meaning which Haddad does not wish the English reader simply to lose.

The problem is therefore genuine. A translation that prints only one reading may give the English reader no indication that another canonically transmitted form yields another meaning. Haddad's answer is sometimes to make the plurality visible within the line itself. At Q 21:4, "*say/he said*" marks the difference between the imperative and past-tense readings. At Q 84:19, "[pl./sing.]" alerts the reader to a canonical difference in the form of address. The notation successfully announces that textual plurality exists. The harder question is whether it makes the meanings of that plurality available in English. That distinction matters. A reader encountering "[pl./sing.]" has learned something true about the Arabic readings, but he has not necessarily received either reading as English discourse. The notation belongs to grammatical description rather than to the translated utterance. Similarly, a slash can place two English possibilities before the reader while leaving unresolved how either sentence is to be heard. The device may document plurality without translating it.

This is not an argument for suppressing the canonical readings. On the contrary, Haddad has identified a dimension of the Qurʾān that English translation has often left largely invisible. The question is what form that visibility should take. If two readings produce meanings that cannot occupy the same grammatical or semantic space in English, forcing them into one line may make both less available than either would have been separately. The distinction becomes especially clear in Sūrat al-Takwīr. At Q 81:24, Haddad encounters the canonical readings *bi-ḍanīn* and *bi-ẓanīn*. Rather than compressing them into a single hybrid expression, he translates one

reading in the line—"*nor is he someone suspected concerning the Unseen*"—and records the other in a note: "*someone stingy*." Whatever judgment may be made about the individual English choices, the translational method is lucid. The reader can apprehend one statement as a statement and then apprehend the semantic difference introduced by the other reading. Canonical plurality has not been concealed, but neither has English syntax been required to bear two incompatible forms at once.

Here the most successful way of making canonical plurality available in English is not to make one English phrase carry both readings at once, but to allow English to state them separately. One wonders why Haddad could not keep this method throughout his rendering. The example clarifies the larger issue. The meanings yielded by canonical readings do not cease to be distinct merely because a translation wishes to preserve them together. Their coexistence belongs first to the Qurʾānic reading tradition, where each reading is recited as a coherent form. A printed English line that combines them simultaneously creates a new linguistic object: not either reading, but an apparatus representing the relation between them. The scholarly information may be exact while the translated discourse has been interrupted.

A note, a second rendering, or another unobtrusive device may therefore preserve more rather than less. The principle is visible in Haddad's own Q 81:24. Separating the readings allows each meaning to become English before their plurality is presented to the reader. The apparatus then performs its proper function: it tells the reader why another meaning must also be heard. The translated line is not asked to become its own critical apparatus. This distinction also helps define the relation between *qirāʾāt* and tafsīr . An exegete such as al-Bayḍāwī can place readings beside one another, identify their reciters, explain their grammatical consequences, and draw out the meanings generated by each. The page of tafsīr is designed to hold that plurality analytically. Translation has another immediate task. It must allow discourse to occur in the receiving language. When the apparatus of comparison is compressed into the translated sentence, the reader may receive the exegete's simultaneity of analysis rather than the reciter's coherence of utterance.

This is one instance of a broader pressure within Haddad's undertaking. His scholarship repeatedly enables him to hear more than a single English line can comfortably say. Al-Bayḍāwī supplies etymologies, grammatical possibilities, exegetical alternatives, rhetorical observations, and canonical readings. The translator's temptation is understandably to preserve as much of that learning as possible. But translation is not diminished whenever

some of the translator's knowledge remains outside the line. Scholarship should enlarge what the translator can hear without necessarily enlarging what the reader must read.

The difference is visible when Haddad's own successful restraint is set beside passages where explanatory material enters the rendering. At the end of Sūrat al-Nabaʾ, al-Bayḍāwī records several identifications of "*the Spirit*," yet Haddad leaves the translated expression open. In Sūrat al-Takwīr, the explanations of the winding of the sun and stripping of the sky disappear into "*wound up*" and "*stripped away*." At Q 81:24, the second canonical reading is preserved without being inserted into the syntax of the first. In each case the scholarship remains fully operative precisely because it has been distributed according to function.

The opposite danger is not only that tafsīr may surround a translation with so much explanation that the Qurʾānic line disappears beneath commentary. It can also occur inside the line itself. Tafsīr can overwhelm translation by expanding around the Qurʾānic expression; it can also overwhelm translation by being compressed inside it.

This is why the relation between learning and simplicity cannot be measured by how much scholarly information remains visible in the English. A translation heavily marked by lexical ingenuity, grammatical notation, slashes, brackets, and compressed exegetical information may display the labor that produced it. A simpler line may embody more of that labor because the translator has completed the further act of deciding what belongs to translation and what belongs to explanation. The simple phrase may be the terminus of the more learned act. Al-Bayḍāwī behind the English, not inside it.

Haddad's experiment with the canonical readings therefore raises a question larger than the particular devices he employs. How can a translation remain answerable to the plurality disclosed by *qirāʾāt* without converting the English Qurʾānic line into a record of the translator's analysis? His work makes that question unavoidable for any translation that wishes to take the canonical readings seriously. Even where the techniques employed do not fully succeed, the undertaking has enlarged the field of what an English translation of the Qurʾān must consider.

The answer emerging from Haddad's strongest passages is not less scholarship but a more exact distribution of scholarship. The translator must hear the canonical plurality, determine what semantic difference it produces, and then decide how that difference can become available in English without destroying the integrity of the English utterance through which it is being conveyed. That requires a discipline at both ends of the act

of translation: a discipline of hearing and a discipline of restraint.

The Double Discipline

The difficulties examined thus far arise from a single demanding fact: translation informed by tafsīr requires two distinct acts of discipline. The translator must first move deeply enough into the Arabic to resist premature English equivalents. He must hear the word through its morphology, syntax, Qurʾānic usage, exegetical history, rhetorical setting, and, where relevant, the canonical readings. But having done so, he must then move in the opposite direction. What has been understood must become available in another language to a reader who does not possess the means by which that understanding was reached.

The first movement protects the Arabic from the translator's assumptions. The second protects the translation from the translator's scholarship. Haddad's work makes the necessity of the first movement especially clear. His sustained attention to al-Bayḍāwī repeatedly recovers features another translation might pass over: an etymological relation, a grammatical possibility, an image concealed beneath an accustomed equivalent, or a semantic difference produced by a canonical reading. The unusual English of the rendering is often evidence not of insufficient attention to the Arabic but of unusually intense attention to it. Many of the difficulties examined above arise only after that scholarly act has succeeded.

The second movement is therefore not a retreat from scholarship. It is the completion of scholarship as translation. The fresh fodder must not disappear behind the cutting from which *qaḍb* is explained; the referent must not disappear behind the etymology of *al-zabāniya*; the terror of the Fire must not be displaced by an English association activated by "*roast*"; the semantic difference between two canonical readings must not be reduced to grammatical notation intelligible chiefly to someone who already knows what the notation represents. In each case the translator has heard something real. The remaining question is whether what has been heard has completed its passage into English.

This also clarifies a distinction that runs throughout the rendering. Exegetical plurality is not identical with linguistic ambiguity. Al-Bayḍāwī may preserve several interpretations because the Qurʾānic expression can sustain them, because transmitted authorities understood it differently, because different grammatical analyses are possible, or because canonical readings produce different forms. These kinds of plurality do not impose the same obligation upon translation. To preserve them indiscriminately would be to reproduce the architecture of commentary rather than to

translate the Qurʾānic discourse.

Haddad himself repeatedly demonstrates the required restraint. Abū Lahab's *mā kasab* remains simply "*what he earned*," although al-Bayḍāwī records more than one way of understanding what was earned. "*The Spirit*" remains unidentified at the close of Sūrat al-Nabaʾ despite the exegetical possibilities available to the translator. The sun is "*wound up*" and the sky "*stripped away*" without the explanatory apparatus through which those images were recovered. At Q 81:24, the second canonical reading is allowed to appear separately rather than being forced into the syntax of the first. These are not moments at which scholarship has been suspended. They are moments at which scholarship has governed its own visibility.

The distinction is fundamental because a translation can be overloaded in the name of fidelity. Every additional piece of information may be true. Every lexical choice may have an Arabic root or an exegetical authority behind it. Every bracket or slash may document a genuine feature of the transmitted text. Yet the accumulation can leave the reader with more information about the translator's analysis and less access to the Qurʾānic utterance the analysis was intended to serve.

Conversely, simplicity need not indicate interpretive poverty. "*Perish the hands of Abū Lahab—and he has perished!*"; "*what he earned*"; "*when the sky is stripped away*"; "*and the dawn when it breathes forth!*": such lines are not simple because the translator has failed to encounter the complexities behind them. They are simple because a decision has been made about which complexities must remain operative in the English and which must remain behind it. The translator's learning is sometimes most fully present when the reader is least made to notice it.

This is the point at which tafsīr and translation must be held together without being confused. Tafsīr can show why a word bears a meaning, how a grammatical relation works, what alternative interpretations have been transmitted, or how another canonical reading changes the semantic field. Translation depends upon such knowledge. But the English reader does not ordinarily need to receive the process by which the translator came to understand the verse. He needs to receive what that process has enabled the translator to understand. A translation grounded in tafsīr must know more than it says.

The principle becomes especially important in a work such as Haddad's because his scholarly apparatus is not incidental to his undertaking. Al-Bayḍāwī and the canonical readings are among the defining features of the project. The temptation to make their presence continually visible is therefore built into the method itself. Yet the greater the learning brought to

translation, the greater the need to distinguish what must become English from what must remain the knowledge by which the English was made.

This double discipline also provides a way beyond a false opposition between literal and free translation. The issue is not whether the translator stays close to the Arabic or moves away from it. A formally close rendering may lose the relation carried by the Arabic form; a less formally corresponding rendering may preserve it. Conversely, fluent English may erase a Qurʾānic image that could have survived perfectly well. The question in each case is what must be preserved for the meaning, image, relation, or rhetorical action of the Arabic to remain available through English.

Formal fidelity is therefore not fulfilled merely when the form of the Arabic remains visible. Nor is semantic fidelity fulfilled merely when an exegetically defensible meaning can be found somewhere within the English words chosen. Both must finally answer to reception: what can the reader who does not possess the Arabic actually receive?

Haddad's experiment with *qirāʾāt* makes this question especially consequential. Whatever judgment is made about individual solutions, he has forced English Qurʾān translation to confront a genuine problem: the received Qurʾānic text is encountered through canonical readings whose differences can bear meaning, while an English translation ordinarily presents a single linear verbal form. How is that plurality to cross into English? Haddad's work does not always solve the problem it identifies, but the problem remains after his particular solutions have been judged. In that respect, one of the most consequential contributions of the translation may be the question it forces subsequent translation to face.

But the answer cannot lie in making English carry visibly every stage of the translator's encounter with the Arabic. The measure of the scholarship within a translation is not how much of its apparatus remains visible on the page, but what that scholarship has enabled the reader to receive. The two movements are therefore inseparable. The translator must go backward, as it were, into the Arabic: beneath familiar equivalents, through tafsīr, grammatical analysis, lexical history, and canonical plurality. He must then come forward again without asking the reader to make the same journey. He should not have to reverse-engineer the translator. That is the double discipline: to hear more than one finally says, and then to say enough that what has been heard can be received.

The Final Field of Judgment

The double discipline finally establishes where a translation must be judged. The translator begins with the Arabic. He may move backward

through morphology, syntax, lexicography, tafsīr, canonical readings, and the accumulated history of interpretation in order to hear more exactly what stands before him. But the reader for whom an English translation is necessary cannot retrace that movement. He encounters its result. English is therefore the final field of judgment.

This does not mean that the English reader becomes the measure of the Qurʾān. The source remains governing. A rendering cannot be defended merely because it is fluent, familiar, or immediately intelligible. The reader may have to encounter unfamiliar images, compressed argument, abrupt transitions, repeated oaths, suspended referents, and forms of discourse unlike those ordinarily encountered in English. The Qurʾān is not required to become familiar in order to become translatable. But whatever is carried across must become available through the resources of the language into which it has been carried.

The distinction is crucial because scholarly readers can easily mistake recoverability for communication. Given "*the Shovers*," one can trace *al-zabāniya* to *zabn*. Given "*hewn bundles*," one can recover the cutting through which al-Bayḍāwī explains *qaḍb*. Given "*a losing recharge*," one can return to the Arabic, consult the commentary, and determine what relation Haddad intended the English to bear. Such reconstruction may establish that the rendering was not arbitrary; it does not establish that the rendering has made the meaning available to its intended reader.

This is especially important in Juzʾ 30 because so much of its force is cumulative and kinetic. Sūrat al-ʿĀdiyāt does not merely name horses and then describe several actions they perform. The oath unfolds through movement: the panting charge, sparks struck forth, the morning raid, dust raised, penetration into the midst. Al-Bayḍāwī hears the sequence as a continuous event. Haddad's "*the coursers*," "*the kindlers*," and "*the raiders*" preserve the participial forms as English agent nouns, but the sequence increasingly becomes a series of named classes rather than a single advancing action. When the charge culminates in "*and stirred up thereat a stagnance*," the movement breaks altogether. An individual lexical choice may possess a recoverable genealogy while the rhetorical event constituted by the sequence dissolves into stagnance.

Formal fidelity must therefore be judged at the level at which form acts. If an Arabic participle contributes to speed, continuity, suspense, or accumulation, preserving it as an English noun while losing those effects cannot exhaust the claim of formal fidelity. If Arabic word order produces emphasis but the same order in English produces uncertainty about grammatical relation, the visible preservation of order may conceal a

functional loss. If a compressed Arabic expression becomes a compressed English expression from which the reader can no longer recover the relation, brevity has survived while concision has not. Formal fidelity is fulfilled not when the form of the Arabic remains visible in English, but when what that form accomplishes in the Qurʾānic discourse can still be received through English.

The successful passages considered above make the point from the other direction. "*Perish the hands of Abū Lahab—and he has perished!*" is formally close without sounding like an archaeological trace of Arabic syntax. "*What he earned*" preserves the Qurʾānic openness without forcing al-Bayḍāwī's alternatives into the line. "*When the sun is wound up*" allows an image recovered through exegetical attention to remain an image rather than becoming its explanation. "*When the sky is stripped away*" does the same. "*And the dawn when it breathes forth!*" is unmistakably strange, yet the strangeness belongs to the image the translation has carried across. In these places fidelity to Arabic and life in English are not competing achievements.

Such passages also prevent the criticism from becoming a demand for paraphrase. The alternative to "*the Shovers*" is not necessarily an explanatory sentence; the alternative to "[pl./sing.]" is not the suppression of canonical plurality; the alternative to an unfamiliar Qurʾānic image is not a familiar English cliché. The issue is not how much explanation the translation should add. Often the strongest solution is the one that adds least because the translator has determined more exactly what the English must carry.

The same criterion applies to the rendering of canonical plurality. Q 81:24 is valuable not because a note is intrinsically superior to incorporation within the line, but because the two meanings remain available as meanings. One reading can be heard as English discourse; the other can then be heard as a genuine alternative. The reader receives the semantic consequence of the canonical difference rather than merely a sign that a grammatical difference exists. What matters is not the visibility of the apparatus but the availability of what the apparatus knows.

This distinction returns us to Haddad's stated aspirations. His rendering seeks both closeness to the letter and "intelligibility, fluency and clarity"; it seeks to preserve something of the canonical readings while remaining a rendering of meanings in English. These aims need not be opposed. But neither can one of them simply certify another. Closeness to word order does not establish intelligibility. An exegetical warrant does not establish semantic precision in English. The inclusion of a canonical variant does not establish that its meaning has been translated. Each claim must finally be tested where the act of translation occurs: in the resulting English.

This is why al-Bayḍāwī remains indispensable to the judgment without becoming its endpoint. Again and again he shows that Haddad's choices have been made with care. Expressions that initially appear eccentric often prove to arise from close attention to a root, a grammatical form, an exegetical gloss, or an image preserved in the commentary. This distinction allows us to differentiate a failed solution from an uninformed one and prevents criticism from attributing to ignorance what arose from learning. But al-Bayḍāwī can establish what Haddad heard; he cannot establish what Haddad's English reader hears. The two acts of reading therefore move in opposite directions. The translator-scholar moves from the English choice backward toward the Arabic in order to test its provenance: Is the meaning present? Is the grammatical relation defensible? Does al-Bayḍāwī support it? Does a canonical reading account for the difference? The reader of the translation moves forward from the English words toward whatever world they make available. The critical study must perform both movements without confusing them. That is why a rendering may be learned and yet unsuccessful at a particular point, and why a simple expression may embody considerable learning. The scholarship of translation is not finally measured by how much of the translator's knowledge the reader can detect. It is measured by what that knowledge has enabled the reader to receive.

The point has particular force in evaluating Haddad because the scale of learning behind the work is unmistakable. Its attention to al-Bayḍāwī, lexical form, grammatical relation, and canonical readings distinguishes it from many English renderings. That learning deserves to be judged at the level of the undertaking it has made possible. The question cannot stop at whether an unusual expression has scholarly warrant. It must ask whether the warrant has completed its passage into translation. The receiving language is therefore not an afterthought to fidelity. It is where fidelity becomes testable as translation. Arabic determines what must be answered to; tafsīr assists in hearing it; the canonical readings may enlarge what must be heard; but English determines whether what has been heard has become available to the reader for whom the translation exists. The final question is not only what of the Arabic can be found behind the English, but what of the Qur'ān can be received through it.

What has reached the reader?

Haddad's *The Meanings of the Inimitable Quran* is a work of unusual scholarly ambition. It seeks to bring into English not merely a sequence of lexical meanings but something of the exegetical depth through which those meanings have been understood and something of the semantic plurality preserved through the canonical readings. Its sustained engagement with

al-Bayḍāwī gives the undertaking a degree of philological and exegetical self-consciousness uncommon among English renderings of the Qurʾān. Even where particular solutions fail, they frequently fail because the translation has attempted to preserve something real. "*The Shovers*," "*the nurturing Lord of the cleaving*," "*hewn bundles*," "*the Eternally-Besought*," and the various devices used to register canonical plurality are not casual eccentricities. They arise from an effort to hear features of the Arabic that English translation can easily flatten or omit. The proper criticism of such choices must therefore begin by recovering what the translator heard before asking what happened to it in English.

The continuous reading of Juzʾ 30 nevertheless reveals a recurrent difficulty. Haddad's scholarship often travels farther into the Arabic than the resulting English can carry its reader. Etymology may become more visible while the referent recedes; an exegetical possibility may harden into a lexical meaning; a formal feature may survive after the relation it performed has weakened; canonical plurality may appear as notation rather than as semantic plurality; an English word may introduce associations absent from the Arabic; and a rhetorical sequence may lose movement while its individual lexical correspondences remain defensible. Yet the same corpus also contains the answer to many of these difficulties. "*Perish the hands of Abū Lahab—and he has perished!*"; "*what he earned*"; "*When the sun is wound up*"; "*when the sky is stripped away*"; "*and the dawn when it breathes forth!*": here Haddad's learning has not been diminished by restraint. It has become more fully translational. At Q 81:24, separating the canonical readings allows their difference to remain intelligible rather than compressing their plurality into a single English construction. These passages show that the choice is not between learned translation and readable translation. The distinction is between learning that has completed its passage into English and learning whose passage remains visible on the page.

This may be the larger significance of Haddad's undertaking. By attempting to make al-Bayḍāwī, Qurʾānic form, and the canonical readings operative within an English rendering, he has exposed questions that concern more than this translation. How much of the exegetical process belongs inside the translated line? What is preserved when an etymological relation survives but its referent does not? How can canonical plurality become available to a reader whose language requires each reading to unfold separately? When does formal fidelity preserve the action of Qurʾānic form, and when does it preserve only its visible trace? Such questions remain even where Haddad's particular answers are judged unsuccessful.

They also return translation criticism to a necessary distinction.

The scholarship behind an English rendering and the experience made possible by that rendering are related, but they are not identical. One can establish with considerable precision why a translator chose a word, what Arabic feature it reflects, which exegetical authority supports it, and which canonical reading it seeks to preserve. All of that belongs to a responsible judgment. But the final act of translation occurs only when what has been understood becomes available in the receiving language.

For a reader who knows Arabic, the distance between those two acts can easily disappear. He can restore what an English word has lost, supply a referent that has become obscure, recognize the Arabic construction beneath an unusual English syntax, or understand what a bracketed grammatical notation signifies. Precisely because he can repair the rendering, he may underestimate what the rendering requires from a reader who cannot. That reader is not incidental to the judgment. He is the reason an English rendering exists.

The demand placed upon the translation is therefore severe but not unreasonable. It need not reproduce the inimitability Haddad rightly declares untranslatable. It need not make the Qur'ān familiar, domesticate its images, resolve all of its exegetical openness, or conceal the existence of canonical plurality. It must do something both more modest and more exacting: make as much as English can bear of what has been heard in the Arabic available through English itself. This is where Haddad's own strongest translations provide the surest criterion for judging the rest. They show that close attention to al-Bayḍāwī need not place commentary inside the translated line; that unusual imagery need not become unintelligible English; that restraint need not impoverish meaning; and that canonical plurality need not be suppressed merely because it cannot always be compressed. The translator's learning is sometimes most fully present when the reader is least required to see its machinery.

No translation can carry everything. Haddad begins from this truth, and any judgment of his work must remain within it. But precisely because loss is unavoidable, the translator must decide what kinds of loss can be borne and what must be protected. The answer cannot be determined by lexical correspondence alone, by formal resemblance alone, or by the authority of tafsīr alone. It emerges from the entire passage from hearing to reception. Haddad addresses that reader. The English must therefore complete the journey that the scholarship began. For that reader receives neither the Arabic root nor the page of al-Bayḍāwī silently standing behind the English. He receives the English. And that English must be able to bear the weight of the learning placed upon it.