

## Personal Note

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The Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University lost Mohamed Enani in January 2023, but he is alive in our hearts and minds and in his library that his daughter Sarah Enani donated to the Department. His office that houses this library has already received many visitors that have made good use of his invaluable translations and literary texts and enriching references. Maha Elsaid, the Editor-in-Chief of *Cairo Studies in English*, and myself have agreed that this volume will not be complete without hearing Enani's voice. This is why we agreed to include Enani's paper on "Perspectives on Resistance."

To pay tribute to Enani, here is "My Personal Note" that was written in 2014 when he won the International Translation Award of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia:

A colossus bridging the gulf that separates Arabic from English cultures, Professor Mohamed Enani has always impressed scholars (and general readers) of both culture-languages with his devotion to both. I, for one, have always wondered at his devotion, loving it and, need I say, making the most of it. Even a casual conversation with him would be enough to show his interlocutor that Enani is equally interested in the 'how' as in 'what' is being said, in Arabic or English, with an implied more than 'academic' interest in the correspondences between the two languages, both implicit and explicit. His work in and on Arabic and English translation has proved, beyond a shadow of doubt, that Enani is exceptionally fitted to bridge many gaps that separate both languages and cultures, hence his often-quoted description as the doyen of Arabic translators, or the master, par excellence, of Arabic translation.

For me, however, Enani has been a life-long mentor-cum-academic supervisor. From the very first lectures he gave my class in the late 1970s, we—classes of aspiring undergraduates—could find in him a role model. His fluent spoken English, with a marked British accent, could reassure us that Arabic-school graduates could vie with their English-school counterparts for supremacy in the knowledge and use of English; but it was mostly his ability to analyze poetry in class that made almost a whole generation love poetry and the textual approach he advocated. Throughout the next two decades several budding scholars were attracted to his approach, producing a formidable 'contingent' of poetry specialists, even though many of them have now opted for the culture-oriented approach, and the new-fangled ideas brought about by the recent Literary Theory. As early as the mid-1990s, however, Enani himself had to confront the basic terms of these ideas in his own way, producing a

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*Cairo Studies in English* – 2023(1):3–5. <https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/>  
DOI: 10.21608/cse.2023.333375

dictionary-cum-study of the most current terms of that Theory—in Arabic. His *Modern Literary Terms*, 1996, set out to demystify such ideas by explaining *in plain Arabic* what they meant. A best seller the book undoubtedly was, but most importantly it showed the uninitiated in the ‘Theory’ that such ideas were not inaccessible and were for the most part a thoughtful literary reformulation of terms borrowed from the sister disciplines of philosophy, sociology, politics, and linguistics.

“Hiding the ravages of time under a sickly mask of mirth”, a Dickensian phrase he often quoted, Enani braved his experience with illness, with cancer no less, in the spirit of a fighter, but then a fighter who never lost his sense of humour. He simply regarded the result of his illness as an invitation to a new life—one of intense learning through the production of translations of literary masterpieces: each translation was forwarded by a scholarly introduction, from Milton to Byron and finally Shakespeare. Enani has now published his 21<sup>st</sup> Shakespearean play in translation. The introductions to these translations, some two thousand pages of literary criticism, cover the entire spectrum of English critical theory from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, even before Dryden (the so-called father of English criticism) to the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While English literature specialists have hailed his Shakespearean translations as the best on the ‘market’, those interested in the ‘schools of criticism’, old and new, have turned to the ‘introductions’ to see how the varieties of feminist criticism, for instance, have influenced our thinking about literature—just as those who deal with new historicism, deconstruction, postmodernism etc. It is fortunate that Enani’s ‘Shakespeares’ are rarely out of print, as demand seems to be increasing and more reprints are made.

Such an outward looking approach to academic pursuits have been variously profitable to our faculty members. “The need to relate”, as he puts it, to both the academic community and to society at large, has inspired others in our Department of English to step out of the parochial outlook of the Englishness of English literature—as instituted in colonial times—and regard the study of literature as such as our prime concern. The tendency started as though by chance one day in mid October 1988, when it was announced that Naguib Mahfouz had been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Malak Hashem, the brilliant scholar, God rest her soul, suggested at a departmental meeting that a book be produced in English representing what Egyptian critics thought of the Nobel Laureate. There was an immediate response to the idea, whereupon the material was compiled, and Hoda Gindi, the chair of the department at that time, as energetic and inventive as ever, decided that the proposed book appear at the next Cairo International Book Fair, scheduled for January 1989. Professor Gindi naturally entrusted Enani with editing the book (including the revision of the translations) with me as his assistant. For two months we worked flat out on both revising the material and proofreading; and the book, entitled *Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel 1988: Egyptian Perspectives* appeared on time. It is the only book, I believe, that is now out of print: such was the demand for it.

What I have called the outward-looking approach of Enani has influenced others in our department, either to translate and get published or to establish fresh academic activities related to our scholarly concerns, such as The Women and Memory Forum initiated by Hoda Elsadda, Omaira Abou-Bakr, Sahar Sobhi Abdel-Hakim, Hala Kamal, Rania Abdel-Rahman, and Aml Aboul-Fadl. Another influence can be seen in adopting Translation Studies as an interdiscipline attracting both literary and linguistic critics and scholars. Postgraduate students have been encouraged to undertake research in this field, and many of them, having obtained M.A.s and Ph.D.s now teach all over the Arab world. Even before the publication of the definitive books on culture and translation, among others, Bassnett and Lefevere, Enani had produced his books on comparative literature in the mid 1990s, showing that we in Egypt were more alive to the changing academic climate than has been thought.

Professor Enani devotes most of his time to translation: he translates and writes about translation, but his first love, the study of poetry, never seems to depart, and he has exercised it in a remarkable way (unexpected for an English scholar) namely in making selections from Arabic poets for publication in the Family Library Series. Beginning with Shawqi and Hafiz in 1996, he proceeded to present selections from 25 Arab poets, old and new, complete with introductions and explanations. He also translated a great deal of contemporary Arabic poetry into English, the most recent being *Angry Voices* published in the USA in 2003.

This is, I have said, a personal note; and to be true to my title I have only dealt with what I feel close to me personally. I have not focused on his writing for the theatre, his many volumes of verse, and his only novel, as I feel incapable of doing him justice. To me Professor Enani is a man who has learnt his real vocation, perhaps more so after his experience with illness, and I look up to him, and am grateful he is in my life.

May Mohamed Enani rest in peace.