The Inimitable Rose’, being Qur’anic saj\textsuperscript{c} from 
Sūrat al-Ḍuḥā to Sūrat al-Nās
(Q. 93–114) in English Rhyming Prose

There are some 60 translations of the Qur’an from Arabic into English, beginning with George Sale’s 1734 The Koran.\textsuperscript{1} In the past ten years, at least seven new translations have appeared: by Colin Turner, Majid Fakhry, Abdulhaqq and Aisha Bewley, Fazlollah Nikayin, Mirza Ab’al Fadl, Thomas Cleary, and most recently M.A.S. Abdel Haleem; a translation by Alan Jones will appear this year (all, incidentally, published in the United Kingdom and the United States). There is also a growing body of translations of selections from the Qur’an. In general, however, in spite of the fact that all translators attempt to convey in one way or another the content and feel of the Qur’an – choosing, say, Victorian style, or King James diction, or poetic turns of phrase – precious few pay attention to saj\textsuperscript{c}, viz. Qur’anic rhymed or rhyming prose.\textsuperscript{2} This disregard is curious indeed, as saj is one of the defining features of Qur’anic language, sound, aya-structure, and architecture.\textsuperscript{3} What follows, then, are my own attempts at translating the final 22 suras into English rhyming prose.

Suras 109, 112, 113 and 114 (here lightly revised) have previously been published in Journal of Qur’anic Studies 4:2 (2002), I am deeply indebted to Bruce Lawrence for citing Surah 93 (here also lightly revised) so approvingly in Journal of Qur’anic Studies 7:1 (2005). Surah 1, 36 and 93–114 also appear in a self-published gratis booklet in memory of my mother and maternal aunt. It is my intention to publish Surah 1, 36 and 76 in a subsequent issue of the Journal, where I shall also discuss the issues I have faced and the choices I have made as I grapple with rendering Qur’anic saj\textsuperscript{c} in English. I should, however, like to note here: (a) that I am more inclined to format Qur’anic passages as prose (pace the recent translation by Abdel Haleem); here, I have intentionally formatted as verse to allow the reader to experience the saj\textsuperscript{c} rhyme visually as well as aurally; (b) that I welcome feedback (smt24@cornell.edu); and (c) that this is submitted with humility.

93. Morning Light

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

\textsuperscript{1}By the morning light

\textsuperscript{2}And by the darkening night,

\textsuperscript{3}Your Lord has not forsaken you – there is no slight.
4 The Hereafter is far better for you than this first life.
5 Your Lord will lavish bounties upon you, and you will know delight.
6 Did He not find you an orphan, then give you respite?
7 Find you unaware, then guide you aright?
8 Find you wanting, and then provide?
9 So, as for the orphan, do not oppress!
10 And, as for the supplicant, do not suppress!
11 And as for the bounty of your Lord, proclaim it!

94. Consolation
In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1 Did We not your breast prise open?
2 Did we not your back unburden
3 Of the weight on it, and tighten?
4 And did We not your good name strengthen?
5 With all distress comes easiness,
6 Yes, with all distress comes easiness.
7 So, when you are free, concentrate.
8 And upon your Lord contemplate.

This is the only sura (or passage, for that matter) with a consistent syllabic structure (eight per aya, except for aya 6 which has nine). I have replicated this.

95. The Fig
In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1 By the fig, by

96. The Coagulate
In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1 Recite in the name of your Lord, Who did create –
2 Did create Humanity from coagulate.
3 Recite for your Lord is Magnanimous,
4 Who, through the use of the calamus,
5 Has taught Humanity that of which it was ignorant.
6 No, indeed! Humanity became transgressive and arrogant
7 The instant it fancied itself self-sufficient.
8 But truly, to God is the final Adjournment!
9 Have you seen the one who would prevent
10 The worshipper from prayer and sacrament?
11 Have you seen if he is on a path unbent,
12 Calling to piety, reverence?
13 Have you seen him turn away from Truth, dissent?
14 Does he not know that God is Omniscient?
15 No indeed! If he does not relent, then We shall seize him by the forelock,
16. Every deceitful, sinful forelock.
17. Let him summon his bloc!
18. We shall summon the Angels of Havoc! 
19. No – pay him no heed! Instead, prostrate, and come close.

These five lines are widely held to be the very first lines of revelation.

97 (I). The Night of Puissance

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. We have revealed it on the ‘Night of Puissance’.
2. What will unmask for you the ‘Night of Puissance’?
3. The ‘Night of Puissance’ excels a thousand months.
4. With the Lord’s permission, the Spirit, descends,
on that night, the angels too, on all errands.
5. Until the break of day, peaceful silence.

97 (II). The Night of Decree

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. We have revealed it on the Night of Decree.
2. What will unmask for you the Night of Decree?
3. The Night of Decree is better than a century.
4. On it, on their Lord’s authority,
descend the angels and the Spirit, on every duty,
5. Until the break of day, Serenity.

Widely understood to be the archaangel Gabriel.

98. Clear Evidence

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. Those who disbelieve, from among the people of scripture and from
among the idolaters both, could not change their ways until
clear evidence was brought to their attention –
2. A Messenger from God, engaged in the pure pages’ recitation,
3. Containing scripture of true devotion.
4. Indeed, the people who received scripture were not divided until the clear
evidence came to their attention.
5. All they were commanded to do was to worship God, to sincerely
devote their religion to Him, as people of true faith, and to
establish regular prayer and give freely in charity. This is
ture religious devotion.
6. Those who disbelieve, from among the people of scripture and from
among the idolaters both, will abide forever in the Fire of Hell –
those are the worst of Creation.
7. Those who believe and perform righteous deeds – those are the best
of Creation.
8. Their reward from their Lord is the Garden of Eden wherein gently
flow rivers, therein to abide forever. Their Lord is pleased
with them and they with Him. This is vouchsafed to those who
hold their Lord in awe.
99. The Convulsion
In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. When the Earth is convulsed with convulsions,
2. And the Earth has expelled its burdens,
3. And everyone asks ‘What ails it?’ and questions –
4. On that day shall the Earth recount its narrations,
5. As compelled by your Lord’s inspiration.
6. On that day shall people appear, in separate batches,
   and be shown their actions.
7. And then, whosoever has done a fraction of good, shall see it,
8. And whosoever has done a fraction of bad, shall see it.

100. The Charging Steeds
In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. By flaring steeds charging,
2. Their striking hooves sparking,
3. The morning camps raiding –
4. Dust clouds thereby thundering,
5. Enemy crowds thereby sundering!
6. Surely to its Lord, is Humanity utterly ungrateful,
7. Surely of this fact, is it completely mindful,
8. And yet for wealth, is it violently yearnful!
9. Do they not know – when graves are depleted of every inhabitant,
10. And breasts are emptied of every content –
11. That, on that Day, their Lord will be, about them, fully Cognisant?

101. The Calamitous
In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. ‘The Calamitous’.
2. What is ‘The Calamitous’?
3. And what will unmask for you ‘The Calamitous’?
4. A day when people will be like moths scattered,
5. And when mountains will be like wool tattered.
6. As for the ones with scales full laden,
7. They shall know a life of bliss.
8. But as for the ones with scales unladen,
9. Their womb will be ‘The Abyss’.
10. And what will unmask it for you? It is this:

102. Competitive Accumulation
In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. You are distracted by competitive accumulation –
2. But only till the graveyard is your destination!
3. No indeed, you soon shall see.
4. No indeed, you very soon shall see.
5. No indeed, if only you could see with certainty:
6. That you shall behold Hell most assuredly.
7. Soon, you shall see it with the eye of certainty
8. And on that day shall you surely be asked about your revelry.
103 (I). Time Endless

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1 By Time, endless,
2 Humanity is assuredly in a state of loss,
3 Except for those who believe, perform righteous acts, mutually enjoin Truth and mutually enjoin Steadfastness.

103 (II). The Evening

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1 By the evening,
2 Humanity is most assuredly in ruin
3 Except for those who believe, perform righteous acts, and upon each other Truth and Steadfastness enjoin.

104. Scandalmongers

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1 Woe to all the scandalmongering rumourmongers,
2 Who count their every amassed belonging,
3 Reckoning their wealth will make them everlasting!
4 No indeed! They shall surely be abandoned to ‘The Mortar’.
5 And what will unmask for you ‘The Mortar’?
6 It is God’s fiery kindling,
7 On every heart encompassing,
8 Upon them all, inclosing,
9 In pillars proliferating!

105. The Elephants

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1 Did you not see how your Lord dealt with the people on elephantback?
2 Did he not turn their ploy into an ineffectual attack?
3 And cast upon them a celestial flock,
4 That hurled upon them pebbles of *sijil* rock?,
5 And did he not make them like a field starvedstruck?
6 Clay pebbles baked in Hell, perhaps.

106. The Quraysh Tribe

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1 Given the pact of the Quraysh Tribe,
2 Their pact for travel in the winter and summer time –
3 Let them worship the Lord of this Shrine,
4 Who feeds them in hunger and who protects them from fright.
5 Muhammad’s tribe, custodians of the Ka’ba in Mecca.
6 The Ka’ba.

107. Kindness

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1 Have you seen the one who rejects faith out of hand?
2 That is the one who repels the orphaned,
3 Who, for the feeding of the needy, makes no demand.
4 Woe to the worshipful who bow and stand,
5 Who wilfully miss prescribed prayers, and
6 Who would be seen praying, and
108. Fount of Abundance

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. Indeed, have We provided you a Fount of Favour abundant,
2. Sacrifice to your Lord, then, and pray to Him, attestant;
3. Your reviler is the one who is deficient.

*A play on the name of a fountain in Paradise, *al-kawthar*, meaning ‘abundance’.

109 (I). The Disbelievers

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. Answer thus: O you who disagree!
2. I do not believe in what you believe,
3. And you aren’t believers in my belief.
4. I shall never believe in what you believe,
5. And you aren’t believers in my belief.
6. I have my belief – You keep your beliefs.

109 (II). The Disbelievers

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. Answer thus: O you disbelieving hypocrites!
2. I do not submit to what you submit;
3. And you are not heedful of what I heed.
4. And I will never believe in what you believe!
5. And you are not heedful of what I heed.
6. You can have your creeds – I have my creed.

110. Victory

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. When God’s victory and His triumph prevail,
2. And you see people entering into God’s religion,
3. Then extol praises of your Lord, and seek forgiveness of Him: He is surely Ever-Forgiving.

*This sura is not in sūj*, though the end-words in ayas 2 and 3 are assonant.

111. Abu Lahab

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. Abu Lahab, and his power both will expire.
2. He will not be saved by wealth or the profits he may acquire.
3. He will be plunged into *lahab*, a flaming fire!
4. And his woman – that kindling-carrier –
5. Will wear about her neck a halter of palm fibre!

*An uncle of Muhammad’s; his wife, mentioned in aya 5, was Umm Janal.*

112. Purity of Faith

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1. Affirm: He is God, Matchless
2. God, Ceaseless,
3. Unbegotten, Birthless,
4. Without a single partner, Peerless.
113. The Dawn

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1 Repeat: I seek refuge in the Lord of the dawn,

2 From the mischief of His Creation,

3 And from the mischief of nightgloom when it blots,

4 And from the mischief of sorceresses, spitting on knots,

5 And from the mischief of the envious envious, when he plots.

114. Humanity

In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate

1 Repeat: I seek protection, with the Lord of Creation,

2 Sovereign of Creation,

3 God of Creation,

4 From the malicious incantations

5 Of the Accursed, whispering insinuations

In the hearts of Jinn and Humanity both, fabrications.

SHAWKAT M. TOORAWA

NOTES

1 These translations are dedicated to my father, Mahmood H. Toorawa.

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2 On this question, see Bruce Lawrence, ‘Approximating sa‘i in English Renditions of the Qur’an: A Close Reading of Sura 93 (al-Dubah) and the bessunah’, *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 7:1 (2005), pp. 64–80. A notable exception is Reynold Nicholson in *A Literary History of the
مهنة التحرير

صدري عبد الحليم (رغمًا هيئة التحرير)

الجامعة الرئيسية:
كلية الدراسات الشرقية والأفريقية بجامعة لندن

كلية الدراسات الإسلامية العالمية في إسلام أديد
جامعة برجشام
جامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة
كلية الدراسات الشرقية والأفريقية بجامعة لندن
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مركز الأبحاث للتراث والفنون والثقافة الإسلامية، استنبول
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الإشارات المراجع:


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المراجعات المختارة أخرى:


المراجعات المختارة الأخرى:


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أغنية الفصل الثاني: إسلام وقانون، دار النشر والنشر، بيروت.

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