



The theme of *fakhr* (self-exaltation) in the translation of Antara's *Mu'allaqa*

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1. Introduction

Although the Arabs have excelled in multifarious kinds of art such as architecture, calligraphy, arabesque and music, poetry has always ranked first since pre-Islamic days. Only recently new art forms, such as novel, cinema and TV, have begun to dethrone poetry. Nonetheless, pre-Islamic poetry never lost its pivotal position as one of the mainsprings of the Arabic literary tradition. Poetry, the most terrific hallmark of the pre-Islamic era can be said to have been deeply enshrined in the social life of pre-Islamic Arabs. Although Arabian life was based on tribal community where only ties of blood were sacred, poetry gave life a new meaning, as it became an invisible bond between diverse clans and gave rise to a national community of sentiment. Indeed, the pre-Islamic era in the Arabian peninsula was characterized by heart-rending poetry; an exhilarating literary excellence that inebriated them with ample arrogance and self-worship. In this context, Nicholson (1995:72) aptly puts that

Arabic-speaking Moslems always regarded poetry as a model of unapproachable excellence; a poetry rooted in the life of the people, that insensibly moulded their minds and fixed their character and made them morally and spiritually a nation long before Muhammad welded the various conflicting groups into a single organism, animated for some time at least, by a common purpose. In those days, poetry was no luxury for the cultured few, but the sole medium of literary expression. Every tribe had its poets who freely uttered what they felt and thought. Their unwritten words 'flew across the desert faster than arrows' and came home to the hearts and bosoms of all who heard them. Thus in the midst of outward life and disintegration a unifying principle was at work

The vast desert, the Arabian peninsula, being characterized by sparse flora and fauna, rainless climate, poverty and draught, played a key role in the emergence of a certain social fabric with certain ethical values and certain ways of poetry composition. Pre-Islamic Arab poetry, which came to depict the barren and desolate nomadic life of desert in a colorful kaleidoscopic panorama, was present in its oral

form, the unwritten poetry from AD 500 to 622. Thus, before Islamic Revelation, the Arabian peninsula and contiguous areas had a thriving oral poetic tradition, which may be regarded as the greatest and often the only cultural treasure nomads possess. Connected with cyclic tribe-life in desert and harsh conditions, there was a striking connectedness between the oral literature of pre-Islamic Arabs and their own culture, a fact acknowledged by ancient Arab philologists who referred to pre-Islamic poetry as *the register of the Arabs*, meaning it contains information on their history, genealogy, world view, cultural values and entire way of life. In other words, oral literature is embedded and enmeshed with the rest of culture in traditional societies (Sowayan 2003: 133; for more details on oral literature see also Monroe 1972; Zwettler 1978; Sowayan 1992; Kurpershoek 2002, among others).

At a very early date poetic texts became a basis of linguistic and humanistic training throughout the history of Arabic culture for native Arabs as well as for all converts to Islam during the centuries of its expansion: grammar, lexicography, stylistics, and rhetoric. "The influence of Arabic poetry in general and more specifically of the early poetic compositions grew so overwhelmingly in Arabic Islam that it became a necessary key to the philological exegesis even of the holy text of the Koran" (Cantarino 1975: 1). Vestigial evidence is always found in poetry to substantiate many linguistic, philological and rhetorical works and statements made by early Arab scholars. Representing the oral mode of thinking and the sound Arab tongue, poetry was sometimes resorted to in order to settle disputed points of Arabic grammar, claiming that it embodies language in its pristine state (cf. Ali 1990: 732–734). To this effect, Holes (2004: 11) states

the only direct evidence we have of the linguistic structure of Arabic before the time of the Prophet Muhammad (570–632) is to be found in orally composed and transmitted poetry, the earliest specimens of which date from the early sixth century, but that began to be collected and committed to writing by the grammarians of Basra and Kufa (southern Iraq) only in the middle of the eighth century.

It is also crucial to point out that casting a scrutinizing look at this poetry, even in its later recensions, reveals diverse dialectical influences in some areas of its morphology, occasional archaisms, and other forms that contravene what later grammarians put forth as normative CLA inflectional rules (Holes 2004: 13; see also Rabin 1955 for more information on Classical Arabic).

2. Qasidas and Mu'allaqat

The Arabic term *Qasidas*, the plural of *Qasida*, means "poems" (sometimes translated into English as 'odes'), and *Mu'allaqat*, the plural of *Mu'allaqa*, means "the hanged poems", for supposedly being hung up on the Kaaba in Mecca. Some other

scholars refer to them as the “seven renowned ones.” The oldest Qasidas or poems date back to the period of *Jahillya*, a derogatory term meaning ‘ignorance’ coined by the early Muslims to designate the state of religious and moral depravity of pre-Islamic Arabs (for a fuller account on the predominant classical and modern theories of ways to divide the old Arabic poem, see Hussein 2004: 297–328). The social function of the pre-Islamic Arabic poet was to produce poetry, normally respecting strict prosodic rules and incorporating linguistic archaisms and grammatical frills, and speaks it out at the annual market in *Ukaz* near Mecca, a regular poetry festival where the craft of the illustrious poets would be exhibited and was held most dear to Arabs in their tribal lifestyles. The poet was also used to amuse his tribe in an erudite evening conversation and tutor their offspring. The poems that were composed in that era are “generally short and conform to strict prosodic rules of meter and rhyme” (Holes 2004: 11, Urbonaitė 2005: 104).

By avidly reading the pre-Islamic Arabic Qasidas and *Mu‘allaqat*, one cannot escape bewilderment. Each *bayt* (a line consisting of two equal hemistiches) of this poetry may be said to represent a separate unit. Such “units” merge into a poem featuring not only grammatical and thematic equilibrium, but also displaying the standardized poetic language in terms of certain established norms such as metrum and rhyme (cf. Nicholson 1995: 72). The Arabic in which this oral poetry was originally composed is referred to by some linguists as Classical Arabic (CLA). Holes (2004: 10–11) maintains that the CLA of pre-Islamic poetry displays “a high degree of elaboration in its inflectional system, a richness in its derivational morphology, and, crucially, a markedly “synthetic” character.” He goes on saying that “the recurrent patterns of thematic structure, conventional imagery and repeated linguistic oddities and archaisms point to an oral-formulaic origin of the type proposed for the Homeric poetic tradition of ancient Greece” (ibid.:10–11).

Placed in a pastoral-nomadic setting, the structure of pre-Islamic poetry differs considerably from that of modern poetry. One of the conventional constituents of the pre-Islamic Qasida, which are also prominent in *Mu‘allaqat*, is the *Gharad*, a section where the performative purpose of the Qasida is being told. A second constituent is associated with *weeping at the deserted campsite* (usually known as the *hays*: a tribal concentration of 10–20 families setting up a camp during transhumans), and *athafi* “the cauldron stones” were one of the most noticeable ruins or remnants indicative of encampment. A third conventional element of Qasida (which follows after *weeping the deserted campsite*) is *Nasiib*, the lyric introduction of the poem, or the amorous verses describing the beloved and belonging to *hays*, where his beloved dwelt once. The fourth component is *Rahiil*, the theme of survival in the desert, a section of Qasida which depicts the prolong wanderings and journeys in the wilderness as to show stamina, fortitude, courage and patience, and the fifth is concerned with *Fakhr* (self-exaltation) in one’s

tribe, genealogy, or immediate forebears, victory in raiding, etc. The last constituent, the sixth, involves *Wasf*, a description exclusive to three important things: (1) his steed or Nagah (she-camel), (2) the desert fauna (e.g. wild ass or onager, oryx, ostrich, wolf and eagle), (3) nature, especially rain storms which would efface the traces of *hayy*.

3. The Present Study

Pre-Islamic poetry provided a forum for venting public opinion on issues that the sanitized phraseology of the Modern Standard Arabic cannot match, or in some cases simply ignores. Notwithstanding the extensive scholarly treatments of pre-Islamic poetry in Arabic (e.g. Starkey 2006), it receives less attention in terms of studying the extent to which it can be translated, i.e., what did receive scant attention is the investigation of whether the elements of "the Arab classical culture" are emerging differently in the conversion process, which, in turn, raises questions about the limits and possibilities of translating this kind of literature. Though springing from primitive and illiterate nomadic tribes, the pre-Islamic bards were no beginners who would compose shaky lines in an admixture of dialects in prevalence at the time. In this paper, the interest in pre-Islamic poetry is threefold: first, it contains a genuine regard for the literary lore of a time now considered a classical period and a golden age, second, *Mu'allaqat* still continue to be upheld as supreme examples of the poet's art, and third, this type of poetry constitutes a linguistic treasure for the rising literary culture at the time - abundant in grandiloquent, sententious, vigorous, and vivid verses, which made it unequalled in any other culture, and which at this time had already attained a remarkable degree of sophistication which poses serious translation challenges. An examination of the theme of *Fakhr* (self-exaltation), the main focus of present study, provides a useful example of this sophistication.

This study will particularly attempt to investigate how the theme of *Fakhr* (self-exaltation) in Antara's *Mu'allaqa* is translationally conveyed and received by contemporary western audience through three selected translations, namely, Clouston's (1881), Arberry's (1955), and Sells's (1989). These translations have purposefully been chosen as to represent three different times, which extended to cover more than a century. Time difference is assumed here to have helped producing a translation that differs from its predecessors in terms of the way the theme of *Fakhr* has been tackled. In other words, the study will attempt to examine whether these translations succeeded in reconstructing or capturing the cultural essence of such a theme; whether they produced a less uniform and a more conflicted version of this "cultural theme"; or, whether they managed to trigger

a similar effect on or response for the TL receivers, who do not have any particular expertise in the SL, and who are interested in “the product to the extent to which it affects them as readers, stimulating some kind of reaction or experience in them as readers” (Hickey 2003: 62).

Culture can be viewed as the defining articulation of social needs and desires. Pre-Islamic poetry afforded the recognition of such needs and desires. Indeed, it is this poetic power of recognition that made poetry the dominant discourse of culture; a discourse that crosscuts differences of race, genealogy, tribal trajectories, social class, religion, trends and viewpoints. Thus, one of the main planks on which an unflawed understanding of pre-Islamic poetry rests is knowledge of the fabric of the society and cultural milieu within which it flourished. Therefore, looking into key socio-cultural concepts and references may well assist in obtaining a clearer picture of its context, meaning, and creative forces and social values of pre-Islamic Arabia (cf. Homerin 1985; Stetkevych 1983; Ezz El-Din 1989). One such prominent creative force stemmed from the theme of *Fakhr*. “Just as we can hardly comprehend a conversation outside its situational context, so we cannot understand or appreciate an oral literary piece devoid of its cultural context” (Sowayan 2003: 133). A disregard to the socio-cultural context is likely to hobble comprehending pre-Islamic Arab society, and making translation a daunting task. Therefore, this paper is concerned with how should translators contextualize this type of poetry and shed light on the *Jahillya* worldview.

Investigating the socio-cultural context is supposed to provide useful lens for interpreting the social content of these *Jahillya* Qasidas and *Mu‘allaqat* and its relevance to the culture that composed them, which is believed to assist in reflecting pre-Islamic Arabian society’s perceptions as they were genuinely resonating at the time. Thus, the translator should venture well beyond translation itself towards the whole relationship between language activity and the social context in which it takes place (Hatim and Mason 1990: 1). “The translator’s communicative competence is attuned to what is communicatively appropriate in both SL and TL communities and individual acts of translation may be evaluated in terms of their appropriateness to the context of their use” (ibid.:33). Indeed, translation is not a sterile linguistic exercise; rather, it is an act of communication. Therefore, this paper substantiates the claim that translation should aim to achieve *interlingual pragmatic enrichment* (Sequeiros 2002: 1069). Finally, for interpretation and literary analysis, and for the deep understanding required for the difficult task of translation, knowledge not only about the socio-cultural context is mandatory but also about Antara’s ‘life’ in our case (for more information on Antara’s life and poetry see Mumayiz 2006: 31–36). Such knowledge will aid the translator to establish a “mutual cognitive environment” (Sperber and Wilson 1986), which would enable him/her to yield a ‘communicatively appropriate’ translation.

4. Discussion

For purely organizational purposes, the virtuous values and traits of Antara which comprise *Fakhr* (self-exaltation) are divided and exemplified on by Arabic poetic material quoted from his *Mu'allaqa*, and then discussed from a translational point of view. The English translations of the quoted Arabic verses, on the other hand, appear according to the following Romanized order: I stand for Arberry (1955), II for Sells (1989), and III for Clouston (1881).

4.1. Honour

فإذا شربت فإنني مستهلك وإذا صحوت فما أقصر عن ندي	مالي وعرضي وافر لم يكلم وكما علمت شائلي وتكرمي
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*Fa'itha sharibtu fa'innanii mostahlikun
Wa'ithas sahawtu fama uqasiru 'an nadan*

*maalii wa 'irdi wafirun lam yuklamii
wa kamaa 'alimti shamaa'li wa takarumii*

(Lit. And if I drank, I am a squanderer of my wealth, but my honor is untouched and unharmed. And when I am awake, I am generous as you know me.)

- I. And whenever I have drunk, recklessly I squander my substance, while my honor is abounding unimpaired. And whenever I have sobered up, I diminish not my bounty (p.181).
- II. When drinking, all I own I spend away, though what I am is undiminished. When sobered, I do not stop giving, true to nature as you have come to know me (p.52).
- III. When I drink it, my wealth is dissipated, but my fame remains abundant and unimpaired, and when I return to sobriety, the dew of my liberality continues as fresh as before.

One of the obstreperous landmark features of Arabs before and after Islam is death-defying defense for dignity and honor; they sacrifice in all they have, and by all means to keep it preserved from profanation, a fact that motivated many Arabs in the pre-Islamic era to bury their newly born females alive. By definition, it is a value that they risk their life for, if compared to wealth which occupies relatively less attention. Many Arab-viewed values are illustrated in poetry as literary and social breadths often intertwined. In his suspended or hung poem, Antara claims such virtues and feels so proud of, in the account that all tribesmen enjoy similar qualities. It is thus no strange that all the addressees of the time were of full comprehension and awareness of the dimensions that such principles signify. The setting of the poem makes it indispensable that enough emotive forcefulness of literature on the addressee and consequently enough response are created on such a kind of composition, an informativity that cannot be relayed or disembodied

likewise on the contemporary readers of the Arabic tongue, nor on the English readers of the translated version, who are distant both temporally and spacially. A less emotive and a clear discrepancy of informativity are anticipated when such an extraordinary piece of literature is translated into English, a language that stands on the stark extreme of the translation equation.

Taken as a whole, Arberry (1955: 181) has succeeded in preserving the denotative meaning intended in the second hemistich of the verse. However, the Arabic '*irdi wafir*', in this verse, which stands for a theme of pre-Islamic poetry, is not similarly transmitted when literally conveyed as 'my honor is abounding'. The counterpart 'abounding' has to do with something tangible such as wealth and property that can be defiled; and as such does not apply to spiritual values such as '*ird*', 'honor'. Moreover, the Arabic '*lam yuklami*' 'unimpaired' in the translation does not reflect the same image of the Arabic version; the author depicts honor as a sensitive element that does not bear even a tiny scarification. Even when drunk, Antara's honor remains intact, and his good deeds continue flowing (Al-Zawzani n.d.: 247; Al-Tabrizi n.d.: 192).

The meaning is not envisioned in Sells' translation (1989: 52). Translating '*irdi wafir*' as 'what I am is undiminished' has nothing to do with the source text message, which underlines the virtuous tribute of honor. Even if such a meaning is denotatively relayed, a far-fetched sense of emotiveness to be produced on the reader of the receptive language remains fugitive and unknown to detain. This culturally-bound emotive connotation is functional in the source text, and is governed by the audience of Antara, who are in apparent differences of English readers of today. What worsens the issue in this translation is the incompatibility between the source and target language texts, particularly when the connotative level inescapably leads to translation loss. As such, readers of the translated text would not fall under the same emotive pressure, which results from the decline to relay the denotative and connotative meanings combined, on one hand, and the mentality and way of thinking of both readerships, on the other.

In the third translation, the Arabic '*ird*' 'honor' is rendered as 'fame' which again does not reflect the denotative level, partly because one's honor is part of his fame. In other words, fame is not only exclusive to one's honor or dignity, as it embraces other virtues such as good education, high position, and generosity that one may enjoy. Moreover, 'abundant' and 'unimpaired' do not respectively echo the exact meaning of '*wafir*' and '*lam yuklami*' 'intact' and 'not wounded'. In the recipient culture, dishonor of one's female relatives does not harm feelings in the case of committing adultery by her will, and females at a certain age can freely have this type of relation. Disgrace, which has unpleasant and unfavorable connotations in the Arabic culture, loses all these associations when translated into the target culture, where it seems natural and communally accepted.

Antara describes himself as a doer of good deeds and at all times. His jealousy for the sake of honor is manifest even when he is drunk; his auditorium was the open-ended desert and his fame passed from mouth to mouth to all corners of the region. This vigilant care for this value stemmed from the social values of the community among which he flourished and gained self-confidence. Antara's feeling cannot be similarly portrayed in the target culture where feminists created enough human rights that allow them to leave parents' home at a very early (sensitive) age, without a watchful eye of male relatives. Thus, an incongruent negative response of target language readers is anticipated as whether or not keeping female relatives intact is not a social credit that people of the western culture strive for.

The self-importance of Antara forced him to behave likewise when being drunk, but more obviously when abstemious, a fact that marked pre-Islamic poetry with a salient feature of hyperbole. Relieving help seekers has made him distinctive among his companions. Boasting in front of the addressee, his beloved Abla enabled him to gush forth the utmost high merits one may devote himself wholeheartedly to. The poet has acquired high moral standards from his own experience, standards that were not gained through pupilage. His fervent motivation to give hand to others came as a result of the stunting years of humiliation under the canopy of racial discrimination. Gallantry and enthusiasm are amongst the various features that formed the behavioral approach of the poet. He does not hesitate to offer help to those who need it, an aspect of the poet that cannot be felt and appreciated similarly in the target culture, where such a deed can be looked at as a form of naivety and foolishness.

Arberry has rendered *uqassiru 'an nadan* as 'I diminish not my bounty'. The translation does not reflect the steady readiness of the poet to create a powerful emotive overtone on the audience, a meaning that is clear in Sell's translation; openhandedness is one of the poet's traits and is given priority, as it symbolizes 'dowry' to gain the approval of his love that kindled his poetic genius. In the translation, *uqassiru* is literally translated as 'diminish' which is not the intended sense in the source text, where bounty is witnessed at every moment of Antara's life, when sober and when drunk (cf. Al-Tabrizi n.d.: 192). Munificence of Antara makes him mindful and conscious as his philanthropy not only has no limits, but keeps him ready to offer bounty at all times and under all circumstances; it is the intoxication which departs him and not the bounty (cf. Al-Zawazani n.d.: 247). He feeds the hungry when the wind of famine blows, and this is the generous behavior that accompanied him since the tender of his age.

Denotative and connotative meanings are strongly interconnected. Loss of denotative meanings inevitably leads to loss of connotative ones. The Arabic lexical item *nada* 'generosity' is literally rendered as 'dew' in the third translation. This

has nothing to do with Antara's decent trait. Readers of this translation may fall victim of the translator's misunderstanding of the source text, which is again a false accusation of that text. Connotative meanings, which are socially and culturally confined, are lost, and thus remain undeciphered in their cultural boundaries.

4.2. Withholding from taking war spoils

يخبرك من شهد الواقعة أنني أغشى الوغى واعف عند المغنم

Yukhbirki man shahida l wagiita annani

(Lit. Those who witness the battle would tell you that

'aghsha l waga wa a'ifu 'inda l magnami

I get into it and abstain from taking anything of the spoils.)

- I. Those who were present at the engagement will acquaint you how I plunge into battle, but abstain at the booty-sharing.
- II. Let the battle witnesses let you know how I rush into the dust-roar blindly, then hold back from the spoils.
- III. And whoever has been witness on the combat will inform thee that I am impetuous in battle, but regardless of the spoils.

Another feature that Pre-Islam Arabs enjoyed is abstaining from taking what they have sometimes endeavored for. This self-esteem has comprised a merit that Arabs at that time were very proud of. The well-known warrior, Antara, clearly illustrates the point by telling that 'booty' in war circumstances was not his goal of entering battles as his honor prevents from taking the very least of it (cf. Al-Tabrizi n.d 195). Sacrificing his life for the tribe and its fame requires that he be awarded a large portion of the uneasy prey. However, the asceticism of what ordinary people are desperate to obtain constitutes a major part of Antara's character, a fact that he won in hotly held contentions (cf. Al-Zawzani n.d 249).

Having its own idiosyncratic semantic intent, conveying the whole meaning *al-ifah* 'self-esteem' in the target language is translation-resistant, incompatible, and collides with social deterrence. The associated meanings are not comprehensively retained in translation since the recipient culture does not seem to perpetuate such naïve-like excellences, and so a cursory understanding of the pre-Islam era is not sufficient to enable yielding a full vision of that historical tradition. In Arberry's translation (1955: 181), 'abstain at the booty-sharing' denotatively expresses the intended meaning. However, this highly appreciated merit of Arabs is not emotively conveyed to the audience of the receptive language, who may judge its doers as mentally unstable and economically immature. This negative view that is likely to be held by the target audience results from the fact that the western culture is materialistically oriented, which generates a greed sense of possession.

The real willing to die for the sake of his people and the abstinence from taking a portion from what is left behind the defeated foe is not a contradictory aspect of Antara's character. Rather, it is property that he monopolized for himself and felt very proud of. Holding back from the spoils in Sell's translation (1989: 53) is concerned with the referential meaning that does not cause translation problems, as both cultures can meet at the border of this meaning. Other borderless and unbridgeable meanings, which are culturally restricted, are not easily attainable, especially in such a type of text where the target culture perceives 'holding back from the spoils' as an ignoble trait of the warrior. This dissonant response on the part of the target language reader can be ascribed to a sufficient disregard to the socio-cultural of the source culture, where such merits enjoy high positions among desert inhabitants.

In the third translation, 'I am impetuous in battle, but regardless of the spoils' expresses the real intention of the poet, Antara, who boldly charges in the battle. However, rendering *wa a'ifu indal maghnami*, as 'regardless of the spoils' does not illuminate the theme of pride which makes Antara's suspended poem distinctive from its counterparts at that time. This translation makes an allusion to the spoils, and such a reference underestimates the virtue of pride which constitutes a major part in the poet's character. Failure in relaying this noble trait of Antara results from separating the textual analysis from the environment that has shaped the text itself. Loss of meaning at the connotative level is thus inevitable and comes as a result of the clear aloofness of the audience on the one hand, and the culture and language to which the two texts belong.

4.3. Non-indulgence in reviling opponents

الشاتمي عرضي ولم أشتمهما والناذرين إن لم ألقهما دمي

Ash-shatimii 'irdii wa lam ashtumhumaa
(lit. Who slander my honor and I do not
slander them)

wan nathiriina in lam 'alqahumaa damii
and who vow to spill my blood if do not meet
them.)

- I. Who blaspheme against my honor, and I have not reviled them, who threaten to spill my blood, if I do not meet them (p. 184).
- II. Who slandered me though I never did the same, vowing blood if I failed to meet them (p. 56).
- III. Men who attacked my reputation, when I had given them no offence, and vowed, when I had never assailed them, to shed my blood (p. 63).

Antara can be described as a deed-not-word man, an asset that stimulates respect even from opponents. His sword is the means of notching the heads of his fame slanderers. He gained self-respect from the tongue that abstains from defaming

others and the sharp-edged sword that does not slacken from beheading maligners. In his *Mu'allaqa*, which stands for an epitome of the era, Antara tries to shed light on the fact that he does not backbite others, including those who revile him (cf. Al-Zawzani n.d 257).

As far as translation is concerned, Arberry (ibid: 184), and Sells (ibid: 56) have successfully relayed the denotative meaning that Antara tried to express in the *Mu'allaqa*. Pride of not slandering others is clearly marked in Antara's poetry, a self-esteem and a self-control that made him a precedent in a world that appreciates such values. His disbelief in the tit-for-tat defamation created in him a real love for ascending high positions in an area that suffered from slavery and racial discrimination. Antara was so successful in compensating the low standard of his black mother, despite the fact that he descended from a noble family. This compensation motivated him to seek shelter in what can be hardly achieved such as bravery, self respect and respect for others, honor and other similar merits that are not reflected in Arberry's and Sell's translations. Target language readers who do not have enough understanding of the pre-Islam culture may understand the silent action of Antara as a source of weakness and Achilles' heel, a flawed understanding that may cause unfavorable view of that Arab era.

In the third translation, the denotative meaning is not preserved to a similar degree as in the abovementioned translations. Attacking one's reputation as a counterpart of *ash-shatimi 'irdi* 'those who backbite against my honor' does not deliver the poet's intended message. 'Attacking' in the translation exceeds the spiritual sense of one's honor and may extend to include physical contact, an extent that can never keep Antara fold-handedly and sitting on his hands. This sense of pride that Antara boasted in public is not a source of humiliation as one may perceive it; on the contrary, this act resonated well among the people of that time and received enough attention. At the emotive level, what Antara has toiled for as to again consideration is patently lost in the translation due to cultural and social differences, where ignoring vain talkers is a great value that deserves social respect.

A sharply contrasting meaning to this sense is the ineluctable pride of chivalry. Antara managed to portray himself as a supercilious fighter who is feared even when unmet (cf. Al-Zawzani n.d. 257). His foes vow to shed his blood when he is out of sight, a sense that medaled him with a highly respected fame. This paradox of Antara's personality is relayed to a great extent in Arberry's and Sell's translation, but to a less degree in the third translation, where the problem results from giving 'assailing' as a counterpart for *in lam alqahuma* 'if I do not meet them'. The meaning in this translation partly illuminates the fear of the enemy when an assault is made against them, a translation that focused only on battle conditions, and marginalized other peace situations where fear creeps into their hearts when getting together with Antara.

4.4. Chivalry

أثني عليّ بما علمت فإنني سمح مخالقتي إذا لم أظلم
وإذا ظلمت فإن ظلمي باسل مرّ مذاقته كقطع العلقم

Athnii 'alayya bi maa 'alimit fa 'innanii
Wa 'itha dulimtu fa 'inna dulmii baasilun
(Lit. Praise me for what you knew as I am
But if wronged, my response is harsh

samhun mukhaalagatii 'itha lam udlamii
murrun mathaaqatuhu ka da'mi l'algami
easy to get on with, if not wronged
and its taste is as bitter as that of colocynth).

- I. Praise me therefore for the things you know of me; for I am easy to get on with, provided I'm not wronged; but if I'm wronged, then the wrong I do is harsh indeed, bitter to the palate as the tang of the colocynth (p. 181).
- II. Praise me as you knew me, manner easy until wronged. Given wrong I give it back, rough as a taste of bitterapple (p. 51).
- III. Bestow on me the commendation which though knowest to be due; since my nature is gentle and mild, when my rights are not invaded; but, when I am injured, my resentment is firm, and bitter as coloquinteda to taste of the aggressor (p. 58).

Antara is known as a magnanimous fighter when having the capacity to revenge; he used to linger before he takes actions that he may blame himself for. Thus, 'the dies is cast, it is too late' does not apply to his decent character. This mild temperament of Antara awarded him an adequate amount of reverence from all who knew about him. Abla has inspired him with violent love that he went astray to the extent that he began to ask her to praise him publicly. This praise of her is his utmost ambition especially that it passes from between the first incisors of the person whom he loved most. This social and cultural context should be considered in translation in order to preserve as much of the meaning in the target language as possible.

In the source text, *samhun mukalaqati* has been rendered as 'I am easy to get on with' in Arberry's translation. Relaying the meaning as such reveals that the poet is not rigorous in opinion and obstinate to take actions as long as he is not oppressed. The condition that the poet put forth is binding to him as he is confident that nobody can oppress him. Antara's chivalry does not appear easily but this should not be taken as an inadvertent trait of his character. Antara does not oppress others and consequently does not bear to be oppressed by whosoever. Arberry's, Sells's and Clouston's translations make clear that if Antara is wronged, then the wrong he does is harsh indeed, bitter to the palate as the tang of the colocynth. These translations relay one of the two interpretations of the *Mu'allaqa*, an interpretation that depicts the resisting character of Antara in accepting the oppression of others on the one hand, and the measures that he adapts when injustice

is done against him, on the other (cf. Al-Zawzani n.d.246). The other reading that is not relayed in the translations is the one which tells that Antara feels so embittered and irritated when afflicted by others, where he accordingly wreaks his wrath upon his oppressors (cf. Al-Tabrizi n.d.190). In its immediate socio-cultural context, the taste that he experiences as a result of this affliction is like the taste of the colocynt.

The three translations have succeeded in conveying the denotative meaning in the target language. However, the social and cultural values which Antara tries to highlight in his poetry remained confined to the socio-cultural setting of the poem. The lack of a mutual cognitive environment between the source language and target language readers is spacious that cannot be easily bridged. This gap is widened because of the poet's use of cultural concepts and specificities that do not lend themselves to easy translation in the target language. The Arabic lexical item *'alqam* 'colocynt' has many linguistic and cultural attributions that may hamper triggering a similar effect in the target language, since the lexicon is alien and may not be fully grasped by the target language receivers as the source language audience does. The extremely bitter taste of this desert plant made it a good parable for all desert dwellers to describe one's agony and one's squirm with pain. This habitual and inherited feeling cannot be satisfactorily transmitted to the target culture where the community does not know the plant, and has not experienced its taste.

The success of Antara in augmenting the poem with cultural references has made its translation into a far-off culture a hard task. Antara has succeeded in addressing his audience by using the language they understand, and describing himself with the morals that they enjoy most. This language use cannot be easily understood by readers of the target text who are not attentive and sometimes inconsiderate of the associations that the source language may hold and the source audience may entertain. Having grasped the denotative meaning of the source text has enabled the three translators to communicate *'alqam* 'colocynt' in the target language. It is obvious now that bringing closer the audience of the two cultures complicates the issue even if the translator is most 'in tune' and 'possesses' the spirit of the original, and 'makes his own' the intent of the SL writer (Hatim and Mason 1990: 11), he collides with an overwhelming current of miscellaneous mindsets.

جادت له كفي بعاجل طعنة
بمثقف صدق الكعوب مقوم
برحبية الفرغين يهدي جرسها
بالليل معتس الذئاب الضرم

*Jaadat lahu kaffii bi 'aajili da'nattin
Bi rahiibati l farghain yahdii jarsuhaa*

(Lit. My hands were generous on him with
the swift stab
Opening a wound whose sound

*bi muthaqqafin sidq l ka'oobi muqawwami
bil laili mu'tasa ith thi'aabi ith thurrami*

of spear that I straightened

guides in darkness wolves searching for prey).

- I. My hands have been right generous to with the hasty thrust of a well-tempered, strong jointed, straightened spear, Giving him a broad, double-sided gash, the hiss of which guides in the night-season the prowling, famished wolves (p.182).
- II. Have my hands awarded the quick thrust of a tempered, well-joined, straightened spear, Gashing him open, the gurgling of his wound guiding through the darkness hunger-worn wolves in search of prey.
- III. Has this arm laid prone with a rapid blow from a well-straightened javelin, firm between the knots: Broad were the lips of the wound; and the noise of the rushing blood called forth the wolves, prowling in the night, and pinched with hunger.

The black knight, i.e. Antara, is very competent in describing himself when entering the dust of battles, a fact that has created a superstitious character that became renowned throughout the land. Well trained in horse riding, veteran in using the sword and spear, and being sound in mind and body, enabled him to face death recklessly and bravely. Antara claims that the physical power he enjoyed helped him to relentlessly strike opponents with a deathblow (cf. Al-Zawzani n.d 250 and Al-Tabrizi n.d 196). The swift thrust was his authority since the first attack is the one that decides the course of the battle. Not only was Antara generous as an openhanded hero, who even refrains from taking his battle due, but he also has an open hand that delivers his rivals with deadly blusters. This nobility and bravado granted him a fame that has befallen others with trepidation, preventing them from perseverance before the two-sharp-edged sword. Foe's head is a vulnerable part of the body and as such was the target of Antara, from where blood gushes forth after Antara's immediate strike. This eloquent description of the victim in the intrepid fighter's poetry produced a nonperishable image in the memory of the source text audience, an image that cannot be created to the same degree in the target language audience's memory.

The wound caused by Antara's strike is deep and sheds blood abundantly, the flow of which echoes in the surrounding areas. The sound of the running blood from the cleaved head sneaked and came into the ears of the wild predacious beasts that writhe with hunger. Arberry has preserved the onomatopoeic feature expressed in the Arabic *jarsuha* 'its hissing sound', which denotes the blood ravine caused by the plunge of the self-proud warrior. This onomatopoeic feature is not maintained and relayed similarly in Sells's translation as 'gurgling', which denotes a sound produced by running rivers and not shallow streams; nor in Clouston's (1881) as the 'rushing blood' though the translation depicts the sudden and gushing force of the blood. The poet's intention is to compensate inferiority by making a legendary epic where the hero is the narrator in order to remain awesome in the disdainful eyes of the discriminating community. These cultural and

social meanings, though preserved denotatively, are lost in the translation because readers of the translated text are not aware of the pre-Islam Arabic culture. Therefore, such semantic associations cannot be easily envisaged because of these unbridgeable socio-cultural gaps, which necessitate having an explicit knowledge of pre-Islamic culture, a prerequisite for the target language readers.

The fighter tries to create a strong emotive overtone on the audience of the orally transmitted version. This oral description is powerful, as it is accompanied by the poet's body movements, gestures, tone, outward show, in addition to the time and place of delivering the poem. The three translations lack all these setting qualities which are very vital in weaving the totality of meaning. Desert wolves are known as dangerous predators that spend all the night scavenging; hearts of desert inhabitants are saturated with the fear of wolves, an idea that Antara found suitable to utilize in his poetry. This employment has lost its value in the translations where people of modern civilization enjoy enough light prevents wolves to come around, compared to the 'Earth Hour' wasteland regions where the eyes of those animals are the only wandering candles. Antara's pride in exterminating opponents and leaving their bodies as palatable bites to itinerant beasts is clear in the source text and cannot be grasped likewise in the target language, where readers are not sentient of the connotative implications of the dark night and the glowing eyes of wolves.

فتركته جزر السباع ينشئه ما بين قلة رأسه والمعصم

Fa taraktuhuujazara s sibaa'i ya nushmahuu
(Lit. I left him carrion of the wild beasts to
attack

maa baina qulatti ra'sihi wal mi'sami
all that between the crown of his head and
wrist.)

- I. And left him carrion for the wild beast to pounce on, all of him from the crown of his head to his limp wrists (p.182).
II. And left him carrion to be torn apart, skull to wrist by rustling predators (p.53).
III. I left him, like a sacrificed victim, to the lions of the forest, who feasted on him between the crown of his head and his wrists (p.59).

The barren region where Antara used to fight his opponents made it certain that the wandering beasts of the area could not gain what to keep body and soul together except with souls distressed. This gave more fear of falling dead at the hand of Antara, where wild animals are the only consoling companions that stroke over the body of the victim. In order to create an appalling terror in the tribes, where battles have their ups and downs, the poet succeeded in addressing them in a menacing language that makes candid the consequences of one's intercalation in any fight with him. Understood as such, whoever contrives to fight Antara should think twice and recoil before the inevitable event comes to pass.

The poet portrays the beasts while seizing upon the corpse of his opponent in a way that makes its portrayal in the target language difficult to dispatch. Left long hours under the sun's incendiary heat, and over the burning sand, the body extremely shrinks and tightens to an extent that the fangs cannot easily snatch and penetrate deep. The cultural and social setting of the *Mu'allaqa* indirectly contributes to the description of the scenario, an indirectness that creates a translation challenge. Arberry managed to elucidate the denotative meaning in the target language, but the pictorial image of the way that the beasts start the appetizing meal is not similarly preserved. The sheep-like prey is entirely intended in the source text by the famished predators that leave no part of it untouched (cf. Al-Zawzani n.d 250). In the source text, *yanushnahu* reveals that the beasts are gluttonous on the one hand, and insist to masticate every corner of the body, on the other. Target language readers who do not comprehend the social and cultural heritage of the source text would not conceive the implications and intentions of this aspect of meaning. While the source text aims at making clear the various manifestations of the desert and their connotations as to expose the self-exaltation of the poet and afflict the listeners with fear, the target text lacks power to create a similar effect on its readers.

4.5. Manhood to Defend Kinsmen

يدعون عنتر والرماح كأنها
ما زلت أرميهم بشجرة نحره
اشطان يثر في لبان الأدهم
ولبانه حتى تسريل بالدم

Yad'uuna 'antara war rimaahu ka'annahaa
Maa ziltu 'armiihim bithaghrati nahrihi
(Lit. They call Antara while the spears, connected
with each other,
I went on throwing them with its breast and face

ashdanu bi'rin fii labaan il adhami
wa labaanihii hattaa tasarbala bid dami
as ropes in the breast of the black steed.

till it was covered with blood.)

- I. 'Antara! They were calling, and the lances were like well-ropes sinking into the breast of my black steed. Continuously I charged them with his white-blazoned face and his breast, until his body was caparisoned in blood (p.183).
- II. "Antara!" they cried, their spears like well-ropes netting the forechest of my deep black stallion. I hurled him, head-blaze and breast-pit, again and again upon them until he was shirted with blood (p.55).
- III. The troops called out "Antara!" while javelins, long as the cords of a well, were forcibly thrust against the chest of my dark steed. I ceased not to charge the foe with neck and breast of my horse, until he was mantled in blood (p.62).

Until now, fame of the tribe is more important than one's life in most Arab communities where the clan constitutes one's identity, and its social structure is based

on blood inter-bonds. One's real belonging is proved at times of afflictions, where one and all are doomed by others' attacks. Though most fights between Arab tribes were for water and herding, as essentials, tribes' followers never dither to defend their fame by joining their tribe's match to battlefields. Antara, who belongs to one of the most famous Arab tribes, gives a clear picture of entering battles with rivals (cf. Al-Zawzani n.d 254). His championship aims at stirring fervor of his people, on the one hand, and infuriating the enemy, on the other.

Orally addressing the congregation that is attended by his beloved cousin, Abla, Antara explicitly demonstrates self-exaltation, a merit that cannot be easily communicated over to the target culture. In the dust of the battle, when the least of help is needed, knights of Abs call for Antara's relief that instantly receives enough consideration from him. The battle horizon was dim and showering with spears, a moment that Antara, the opportunist, found appropriate to seize. The continuous flow of lances while targeting the breast of the black steed is like a well-rope, a scene that expresses the battle's frightening aspect. In Western Culture, where such means of war are worthless, readers would not share Antara's source language audience the same degree of comprehension, response, and suspense. What worsens the issue is that readers of the target language are not familiar with ropes of deep wells, being basked with the abundance of water that they do not toil to obtain. This cultural cleavage harms the communally observed explicit values of the poem, and causes disinclination in the target culture.

The three translations have relatively managed to convey the superficial meaning of the text, but fell short to relay layered connotations that cannot be observed without a telescopic reading. The poet is portraying himself as a hero where trained fighters have no capability to face. This clearly depicted chivalry of the poet cannot be maintained in translation, where readers are ignorant of the source text culture and less appreciative of the values that still receive enough respect from Arabs in general and dwellers of desert in particular. On the main, the lingua-cultural remoteness, modernization, renaissance and lately globalization as western concepts dictate that such deeply grounded values of pre-Islam Arabs are worthless and do not relate to the present whatsoever. As a result, these culture-specific meanings of the source text cannot be preserved to a similar degree in the target culture, which lacks sufficient familiarity and acquaintance with the unique social life and culture that prevailed before Islam.

ولقد شفى نفسي وأذهب سقمها قيل الفوارس ويك عنتر أقدم

Wa laqad shafaa nafsii wa 'athhaba saqmahaa
(Lit. What has cured my soul and taken away
its sickness

qiilul fawaarisi wayka antara aqdimi
is that they said "Oh Antara, go ahead on them".)

- I. And oh, my soul was cured, and its faint sickness was healed by the horsemen's cry, 'Ha' Antara, on with you!' (p. 183).
- II. My soul was cured of its sickness and restored by the cries of the horsemen, "Antara, on!" (p. 55).
- III. Then my soul was healed, and my anguish was dispersed by the cry of the warriors, saying, "Well done, Antara: charge again!" (p. 55).

In the skirmish that knows no mercy and no peace mediators, Antara defies death boldly in order to defend the tribe and its fame. What inspires him is the high self-esteem in a battle that is observed by all members of the fighting clans, who, and whose, ancestors would narrate the onslaught of the fighting knights. Antara impatiently waits to be called for giving relief to those who are restricted and cannot move around (cf. Al-Zawzani n.d. 256). Amidst the rattle of swords, the breakage of spears, the neighs of horses, and the ululation of victory, Antara seeks his own type of relief from companions, a relief that expands his breast through giving an immediate response to help seekers.

The distance in time and place between the source text and the translated one, the social and cultural remoteness, the urban and the nomadic conflict, and the literacy and illiteracy variations have all contributed in making the social values of the knight peculiar to Arabic and the campsites of Arabia. As translation is incapable of exporting all the semantically open-ended elements of a literary text, incompatibility of the two versions is unavoidable however professional the translator may be. In the translations under discussion, enough denotative meanings are always relayed to the target language, as the translators seem to have enough fluency of both cultures and languages. However, the highly appreciated values and individuations that the poet tries to demonstrate in the *Mu'allaqa*, and which were centering around his admirable traits such as courage, boldness, self-esteem and boasting before spectators have not been accurately rendered in the target language.

The poet tries to create a tremendous emotive power on the audience by stating that not only the ordinary fighters seek his help, but also the well-trained and experienced knights who share similar fighting excellences. This self-adoration which the poet employs in the *Mu'allaqa* does not comply with present wars where individuality is not apparent as war is settled on the basis of huge armies that use different types of weapons. The complications of the source text impose the fact that readers of modern translations should have enough social and cultural backgrounds that can enable them to take pleasure in reading it. Moreover, understanding the tribally-based political system of the pre-Islam Arabs is necessary to modern target text readers where tribal ties are melted in the states of

law. Translations of such text-types and literary genres should acclimatize the text to the modern audience, and acclimatize the audience to such masterpieces by bringing closer all the related social and cultural denominations and implications that contribute in forming the total meaningful structure of the verse (or poem/*Mu'allaqa*) to be translated.

5. Conclusion

This study has investigated the possibility of translating, into English, Antara's *Fakhr* (self-exaltation), as a prominent theme in pre-Islamic poetry in general and his famous *Mu'allaqa* in particular. The study has shown that the source text has proved that Antara's *Mu'allaqa*, like other pre-Islamic *Mu'allaqat*, does not lend itself to easy rendition as it offered many recalcitrant problems that perplexed translators and readers alike. Pre-Islamic poetry translators in particular are normally faced with many special culture-bound problems that made preserving this theme in the target language a laborious task, let alone some miscellaneous complications arising from linguistic, climatic, and economic-political dimensions of the steppe and sown *Jahillya* Arabs. The main point of the discussion accentuates the fact that translators should have enough extrapolation and cognition of the socio-cultural, spatio-temporal context in order to capture as much as possible of the multi-layered meanings of such type of poetry. As far as the analysis of the three selected translations is involved, the discussion revealed that, owing to the daunting complexity of incompatibility and distance between the two languages, the translations have only managed to maintain the textual substance, but have not conveniently captured the socio-cultural essence and implications, a noticeable translation erroneousness, for which the translator cannot take the blame, which hobbled yielding the required semantic effect and the required reader's response in the target language version. Accordingly, it can be generally concluded that the socio-cultural, spatio-temporal context can provide a broader frame of reference for analyzing, interpreting and communicating the original *Mu'allaqa* in a completely new, contemporary setting of rendition and reception.

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Abstract

This paper investigates the possibility of translating, into English, Antara's *Fakhr* (self-exaltation), as a prominent theme in his renowned *Mu'allaqa*. The theoretical framework rests on the supposition that a literary work in general and pre-Islamic poetry in particular must be examined within its socio-cultural, spatio-temporal context as a total meaningful structure which entails the semantics and pragmatics of the text.

Examining this theme in three selected translations, the analysis shows that the source text has proved that *Fakhr* (self-exaltation), as a conventional constituent of Antara's *Mu'allaqa*, presents a remarkable degree of sophistication which poses serious translation challenges.

The discussion also reveals that, owing to the daunting complexity of incongruence and distance between the cultures of the two languages, the translations have only managed to maintain the textual import, but have not satisfactorily captured the socio-cultural denominations and implications, a perceptible translation erroneousness, which impeded straddling the required semantic effect and the required reader's response in the target language version.

The paper draws the conclusion that the socio-cultural, spatio-temporal context can provide a broader frame of reference for analyzing, interpreting and translating the original *Mu'allaqa* in a completely new, contemporary setting of transmission and reception.

Keywords: *Mu'allaqat*, *Fakhr* (self-exaltation), socio-cultural context, translation erroneousness, spatio-temporal context, reader's response

Résumé

Cet article examine la possibilité de traduire *Fakhr* (auto-exaltation) d'Antara en anglais, un thème marquant dans son célèbre *Mu'allaqa*. Le cadre théorique se fonde sur la supposition qu'une œuvre littéraire en général et la poésie préislamique en particulier doivent être examinées dans leur contexte socioculturel et spatiotemporel en tant que structure significative totale qui entraîne la sémantique et la pragmatique du texte.

En examinant ce thème dans trois traductions sélectionnées, l'analyse montre que le texte source a démontré que *Fakhr* (auto-exaltation), un élément constitutif classique du *Mu'allaqa* d'Antara, présente un degré de sophistication remarquable qui pose de sérieux défis de traduction.

La discussion révèle également qu'en raison de la complexité intimidante de l'incongruité et de la distance entre les cultures des deux langues, les traductions n'ont réussi qu'à conserver la signification textuelle mais n'ont pas saisi de façon satisfaisante les dénominations et implications socioculturelles, une erreur de traduction perceptible qui a empêché d'englober l'effet sémantique requis et la réponse nécessaire du lecteur dans la version de la langue cible.

Le document conclut que le contexte socioculturel et spatiotemporel peut fournir un cadre de référence plus large pour analyser, interpréter et traduire le *Mu'allaqa* original dans un cadre de transmission et de réception complètement neuf et moderne.

Mots clés : *Mu'allaqa* d'Antara, auto-exaltation, contexte socioculturel et spatiotemporel, traduire l'erreur

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