Chapter - 6
The Book of Sana’a

Abdulazeez Al-maqalih is a well celebrated Yemeni Poet, critic and a tower of literary figure. He is not known only within the Yemeni borders but his literary fame reached the whole Arab countries and probably the world as well. He was born in 1937 in the Ibb Governorate. His father, as a critic of the Imam’s political system, was arrested and imprisoned in Hajja. Abdulazeez’s earliest experiments with poetry in his late teens, at the same time, his academic success earned him a scholarship to study in Cairo. He earned his B.A. from the Department of Arabic at Cairo University in 1971 and his M.A. from the Department of Letters at the university of Ayn Shams in 1973 and his Ph.D. from the same university in 1977. When he returned to Yemen, he was appointed the Vice-Chancellor of Sana’a University from 1982 to 2001. In addition, he is the long-standing president of the Yemen Center for Studies and Research, where he maintains a desk amongst its library shelves, and offers advice and encouragement to all students and scholars. He received the Lotus prize for literature in 1986 and UNESCO prize for Arabic Culture in 2002. The French Government awarded him the title of Knight of first rank in Arts and Letters in 2003.
Collections of poetry

1) Sana’a-There is No Escaping Her (1971).

2) Mareb Speaks (in collaboration with Abduh Othman 1972).

3) A Letter to Sayf bin Dhi Yazan (1973)


8) Notes on a Body Returning from Death (1986).


In addition to that, Al-maqalih wrote a great deal of literary and theoretical works. Further, he is a regular daily newspaper writer and articles penman in different local and Arab notable literary and academic periodicals. The Book of Sana’a contains fifty six poems, all devoted to The Old Sana’a City. Therefore, Sana’a for him is the capital, the homeland, the compassionate mother, the sweetheart and the nymph. This collection of poems was translated by Bob Holman and Sam Liebhaber. Bob Holman is an American poet, wrote a number of poems including “The Collect Call of the Wild.” The other one is Sam Liebhaber who received his BA. degree in Greek and Latin from Darmouth College in 1996 and his MA degree in comparative
Sana’a and the Poet

From Al-naderah town, Ibb governorate, the seven year old boy Abdulazeez, along with his family moved to Sana’a where they lived in Khudayr street. Here, Abdulazeez became familiar with Sana’a’s old markets, narrow streets, small alleys, tall buildings and plaster colored windows. Since his childhood he was busy in exploring Sana’a’s beautiful gardens which surrounds the old city as a ring around a finger. Sana’a for him is not a man-made city, it’s God’s made portrait. Sana’a is an ever-lasting natural museum within its seven gates and zigzag fence. Identification and intermixture are common ground between the poet as a human being and Sana’a as a place. The poems which we are going to analyze here described Sana’a not as inanimate being, rather, as an animate, has feelings, passion and soul. In the poems, the poet personified Sana’a, the non-living things changed into living ones. The poet created a common language between him and the streets, mosques, markets and the houses. Consider the following verses and try to feel it yourself.

She was a woman
Who fell from the sky in the robe of dew
and became a city
Sana’a! capital of the spirit!
Her gates are seven and paradise
Her gates are seven
Each gate will satisfy a desire
for you, traveler,
and from whatever gate you have entered
Peace be upon you, peace be upon Sana’a.(P.25,The BS).

This is Sana’a. Sometimes she is an old woman. Sometimes she is a
chanting young woman and sometimes a legendary one. That is what we will
explore in this interesting journey. Even the weather and the water of Sana’a
are incomparable.

Sweat in her water, sweat
in winter the drought is a friend
in summer even the dog days are light
at the down-pour of sunlight
She awakes. (P.25,The BS).

What is the poet seeing in Sana’a is something incredible. He asks in a
kind of astonishment:

Did she rain down from a book of mysteries?
Or did she rise from the violet fields?
Or did some rhymes conjure her
From the spring of an ancient dream? (P.27, The BS).

Sana’a is not merely a city or the capital of Yemen, it is the history
itself. History of Sana’a traces thousands years back. So, when you go to

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Sana’a, you feel intimacy with history beauty and its remote civilization. Sana’a is a human being treasure.

She guards a trove of dreams
in her depths,
in courtyards where lustrous weddings take place.
Qasidahs are born from her rock, (P.29, The BS).

As a chanting, beautiful and mature young woman, she needs to be protected from its greedy and jealous enemies, so “Cumulus” the mountain, which is overlooking her, is her strong and honest bodyguard, and her lover as well.

“Cumulus”!
That was his name.
the clouds refresh themselves
on his shoulders,
the dust storms on his foothills
are broken.
he is her eternal guardian:
he caresses her when she arises,
kisses her when she falls asleep,
he is her pillow when she dreams. (P.31, The BS).

Even her names and dresses, Sana’a likes to change them from time to time according to the mood she is in. Sometimes she is called Sam City, as the legendry said that Sam bin Nuh who first built Sana’a. Sometimes she is
called Azal, the name of Nuh’s son. Sometimes she wears silk but sometimes
she wears ashes.

"Sana’a” the name has changed
as her descendants have changed.
The succession of centuries
Washes the face of the earth free
of mausoleums
and monuments.
Sometimes Sana’a wears silk,
Sometimes she wears ashes. (P.33, The BS).

Nukum or Cumulus, once was happy of wearing green garments but what
happened to him today?

The succession of centuries has stripped
His green garments.
Has ground his feet to pebbles.
His chest now is the haunt of wolves
but his peak still emerges like a star
when darkness is complete.(P. 35, The BS).

The poet takes us on tour inside Sana’a and introduces us to her eternal
beauty.

In the time of Sam bin Nuh,
Sana’a was ancient castles
And silver windows.
A dove traced her from after the tidal
wave receded
and the flood grew quiet.
The dove circles over her minarates
and sing to its ancestors
the song of candles that flicker
at dusk
Dancing over the hills. (P.37,The BS).

The poet, in the previous verses, reminds us with the great flood occurred in the time of Sam bin Nuh thousands years back. He creates a relation between Sana’a’s old history and the great flood legendry. Now the poet stops awhile and tries to gather his scattered memories going back decades to tell us about his childhood’s experience with Sana’a.

I remember her...
I was a child with overwhelmed eyes, I saw her charms
and the shadow of her veil.
I followed the flood of her steps.
I drank her fragrance.
I bathed my eyelids in the moisture
of her shade
while my heart saw angels painting the horizon
with wadis and palaces. (P. 43, The BS).

Sana’a is also a warmhearted place for anyone comes close to her. In addition, she still can remember the people she loved.

On the first line
above the wall of ancient history
on the gate of Ghamdan, an inscription
lights the scene.
Its following characters spell out a greeting:
“Don’t feel ashamed if you have misplaced
your lanterns and map,
if you have forgotten the address
of your lovers
or the curves of your name
from the time she was positioned on the axis of the earth,
she has known who you are
and those who you desire. (P. 53, The BS).

After years of pursuing his education abroad, the poet came back
yearning for his beloved sweetheart, Sana’a. He was longing to hug her, kiss
her beautiful face and embrace her with his arms. But alas! For his surprise,
Sana’a whom once he loved doesn’t exist. The new Sana’a looked artificial,
fake, wearing a lot of make ups to cover her wrinkled face. In short, the era of
modern technology had destroyed Sana’a, demolished her old beautiful
designed houses. Instead, Sana’a became deformed in body and spirit. Even
her old robes changed into new fashioned dresses. Iron bars, cemented roofs,
plastic windows and artificial color glasses decay its body.

She was as small as the size of my sadness.
at that time there were no insides inside her,
neither teeth of rubber
Nor of iron.
How did she grow into the suburbs of my sadness?
How did her new districts dare
to don a crumbled headdress
and custom eyeglasses?
How did ancient casbahs compete
In red bed rooms
and with a borrowed plum, besides?!
There are no devotees of them...
these new neighborhoods,
from after our ancestors desired Sana’a
in her ancient garb. (P. 55, The BS).

Hatem Al-sakr in his article,”The City and the Friends in Two Poetic Works” writes:

The Book of Sana’a is considered a precious record for many unique characteristics the city is famous for. The Book of Sana’a shows us the elevations of Sana’a and its discovered and undiscovered treasures, let us see and touch its beauty and environments. But most importantly, the book invites us to build a humanitarian relation with Sana’a, historically and geographically.³ (my translation)

The image of Sana’a never departs Al-maqlih’s perception, either when he is in a sad mood or in a good mood as Dr Al-sakr points out

“As soon as the image of Sana’a through these fifty six poems comes to the poet’s memory, it comes mixing with his sad mood, irrespective of Sana’a’s imagined beauty in the poet’s vision, even
at the time he recalls its singers' voices in qasidah.\textsuperscript{4} (my translation)

"Sana’a is not houses" the eyes say.

"Sana’a is music, the scent of jasmine
From her oriels."

She sings when she is content,

She sings when she is heartbroken

She flings her childhood to the clouds,

Scatters fables to her folk and then sleeps

On a bed of qasidahs, guiding them to the ground...

(P. 135, The BS).

As a matter of fact, both Sana’a and the poet were born at the same moment. That is what Hatem Al-sakr suggests. "In qasidah 14, we witness the births of both Sana’a and the poet.\textsuperscript{5}

"When I was born Sana’a was with me.
In my swaddling clothes.
In the morning’s milk I saw the whiteness of her minarates
and domes. (P. 88, The BS).

The poet within the pages of The Book of Sana’a takes us on a tour and see every corner of the old city, and along with him, we recall her late poets, singers, artists, session gatherings, natural bathrooms, mosques and old markets. We don’t miss its notable milestones such as
Ghamdan Palace, The Door of Yemen, The Grand Mosque, Wadi Dahr and The Stone Palace.\(^6\)

Al-sakr concludes his comments:

The Book of Sana’a is considered the offspring of the poet’s lifetime dedicated to both himself and his reader who is waiting long to hug it.\(^7\) (my translation)

Abdulmalik Murtazy, a professor of the Arabic literature at Sana’a University, on his comments says,

It is not strange in poetry to find non-living things turn into living beings. That is exactly what happens to Sana’a’s Al-maqalih whose poems in The Book of Sana’a make Sana’a and its environments think, speak, touch, interact, laugh, cry, and complain.\(^8\) (my translation)

Wejdan Al-say’g, a professor at Sana’a University gives her reaction in the following way:

What attracts your attention while you’re wandering Sana’a narrow streets is that type of unique windows saturated with fragrance of heritage. You can’t imagine Sana’a without its houses’ windows overlooking at you from the ancient history with their ornamented colored and architectural designs.\(^9\) (my translation)

**Translation of Poetry**

It has been said that the real meaning of any given piece of poetry, exists only in the mind of its creator. Similarly, in Arabic, we say “the
meaning exists in the abdomen of the poet to express misunderstanding of something. It is really difficult for anybody to tell the exact meaning of a particular piece of poem whatever interpretation has been given in order to clarify that poem. That is simply because poetry is a wide open field to be interpreted. Poetry is designed not only on semantic and syntactic language elements, further, it is established on the inner feelings, emotions, passions and other hidden and unseen humanitarian sentiments. The poetic language is entirely different from that of prose and the other literary forms. The language of poetry stands by itself for it mixes reality with imagination, facts with dreams. When a poet sits to himself and starts composing a poem, he brings the world close to him with all its possibilities and impossibilities. In short, the poet is a creative person, a painter but with different tools. The world of the poet is full of music, love and flowers but sometimes it is full with sorrows, wounds and ashes. Meaning in poetry is too far to be reachable, therefore translators find it too toilsome to translate poetry for its imaginative and figurative dimensions, not only this, its words have their own connotative references too. If this is the real picture, what should translators do when translating poetry? Should they penetrate the head of the poet, as one of the translators jokingly comments? Or is it better for translators to quit such a painstaking job and not come close to this sensitive zone since it is surrounded by traps and tricks? What are the real problems encounter translators translating poetry? The coming discussion will reflect some ideas which might help to solve a part of such a dilemma. Here we start with L.S. Deshpande whose remarks focus on the nature of literary translation in general. Deshpande writes:
Literary translation is, in its own way, a mode of cross-cultural communication. It is not simply derived or second-hand communication. It is not just a TL replica of a message or a text in SL; it is rather a creative process by which meaningful experience is communicated from one speech community to another.  

And to show the problems of translating poetry he writes:

Translating poetry poses problems peculiar to the language of poetry itself:

1. At the level of phonetic: poetry is almost impossible to translate because of its rhythmic pattern, its metrical form, its sound effects such as assonance alliteration, onomatopoeia, are lost in the process.

2. At the syntactic level: It is difficult to translate since the words and their ordering, the lines and their endings, the stanzas and structuring involve problems pertaining to the expression use of language.

3. At the semantic level: One is faced with the problem of equivalence

   ...In translation poetry, meaning tends to get lost in terms of its evocative, suggestive, associative and referential aspects in a greater or smaller measure.\textsuperscript{11}

And to come to the main point, Deshpande points out:

   ...form and meaning are so fused into each other, that it is almost impossible to separate one from the other. This identity of form and meaning, their coalescence, renders poetry difficult, and lyrical poetry almost impossible, to translate.\textsuperscript{12}

Savory defines poetry as:
“the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the senses; the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colors...There is rhythm metrical, there is emotion, sensuous, there is an increased use of figures of speech and a degree of disregard for conventional word-order, there is imagination”.

And since poetry is a personal experience, records an experience of the author, how can a translator explain that experience and others share the author's? Lila Ray answers:

..poems are read chiefly for their aesthetic value Every poem records an experience of the author and the translator, who gets aesthetic satisfaction by reading it, tries to re-enact the original experience of author...The translator has to enter into the mind and heart of his author, relieve his circumstances, refeel what he felt, perceive what he percieved.

Raffel gives the following reflection:

Poetic translation as an art, not a science, and much of the art is concerned with choosing what to put in, what to leave out and what shape to give the work as a whole, what tone.

G.H. Lewes' views confirm what Deshpande says previously meaning and form are inseparable.

The meaning of a poem and the meanings of the individual words may be produced; but in a poem meaning and form are as indissoluble as soul and body; and the form can not be reproduced. The effect of poetry is compound of music and suggestion; this
music and this suggestion are intermingled in words, to alter which is to alter the effect.  

And to give a clear idea related to poetry and prose, Lewes says:

For, words in poetry are not, as in prose, simple representatives of objects and ideas; they are parts of an organic whole— they are tones in the harmony—words have their music and their shades of meaning too delicate for accurate reproduction in any other form; the suggestiveness of one word can not be conveyed by another. Now all translation is of necessity a substitution of one word for another; the substitute may express the meaning; but it can not accurately reproduce the music, nor those precise shades of suggestiveness on which the delicacy and the beauty of the original depend.  

In the event, Lakshmi writes:

In fact, poems are being appreciated more for their quality, style, metre, rhyme and figures of speech than for their meaning. In poetry, as in every literary text, words not only carry their plain meanings but also carry connotative, stylistic and cultural meanings. The translator very rarely finds equivalents to such loaded words in the language. Luck of equivalents might lead to loss of effectiveness and, perhaps, meaning in the translation.  

Under the title “Is Poetry Lost in Translation?”, Sreedevi K. Nair introduces this difference between a poem and its translation.

The difference between a poem and its translation starts right from the stage of conception. A poet writes about a particular thing or experience because his deep perception of it has a strongly moved
to give a verbal expression. Thus, it is his own emotional, imaginative, or intellectual apprehension of facts and experiences that a poet tries to express. In the case of a translation, the cause for its genesis is the existing poem. This original work stimulates the translator so much that he experiences a deep affinity for the work which in turn prompts him to create a version of that experience in his own language.19

Perfection in translating literary genres is almost impossible, especially in terms of poetry and according to Sreedevi “perfection” exists only in the mind of the creator.

Perfection can not be there in the poetry that we read, it is there only in the poet’s vision. Actual poetry that which is waiting to be born. Poetry loses much of its charm when the poet externalizes or translates into words the inner melody and the uniqueness of his vision.20

In his article, “Translation of Poetry”, P. Rengasamy shares us the following remarks:

Translation is a tough job. Tougher it is to render drama and poetry. Of these two genres, poetry is normally, precise, tense, and even verbally economical...Brevity is the soul of the poets. It is this along with other impediments that make the translation of poetry a hurdle rather uneasy. Along with these structural constraints, other setbacks are the stylistic devices, the sound effects, emotive and symbolic passages, ironical and allusive statements and the tonal meaning not excluding the cultural incompatibility.21

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Again with Sreedevi, but this time she is talking from a practical point of view as a translator. She explains the translation process step by step and what radical changes happen to the original poem. She writes:

...because during translation SL graphology and consequently SL phonology are inevitably replaced by TL graphology and TL phonology respectively. But even the number of lines are drastically reduced in translation ...Thus, a change has occurred in the length and form of writing and this certainly changes the first visual impact that the original makes upon the reader...When a poem is translated, the sound of the poem, and the internal and external perceptions of its acoustic beauty and the emotions attached to them are changed...words with their bases, prefixes, suffixes, of sense and their connotations are changed in translation...the relationship between words, the arrangement of words in sentences etc are changed in translation...the translator before doing the work of translation must determine the original author's style and then shape his accordingly.\textsuperscript{22}

What has been reviewed so far was a package of different insights pertaining to poetry translation. Such concepts, in effect, show how much problematic translation of poetry is.

At the same time how much burden translators are suffered from. The natural question which might be raised now is "What method(s) can translators follow to fulfill their ultimate goal in translating poetry?" Unfortunately, there is no a clear-cut answer for such a question. But in order to solve a part of this disputed and longstanding issue, we are going to review some of the translation methods. In her thesis Problems and Principles of
Translating English Poetry into Arabic with Special Reference To T.S.Eliot’s The Waste Land, Wissal Al-allaq reviews different translation methods. She classifies them according to the following groupings:

a. Methods which concentrate on rendering the formal and the phonological characteristics of source poem.
b. Methods which take into consideration the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the source poem and author.
c. Methods which render the content of the source poem rather than its form.
d. Methods which render the source poem’s content in a poetic form in the target language.

After she reviewed, discussed and analyzed every method with its subdivisions, Wissal disregards the following methods owing to their inadequatenesses and ineffectiveness. She starts her discussion thus:

A. Phonemic translation:

The phonemic translation is useful and valid in three positions

1. Translating proper names.
2. Translating source language words for words in the target language that are related to the former etymology.
3. Translating anomatopic words.

B. Metrical translation:

This translation method is not useful for the following reasons:
Metrical translation is not a valid method of translating poetry. This is due to neglecting the most important of any text, i.e. the context and concentrating on metre-an element of less important.  

C. Rhymed Translation:

This method is not accepted too for

...In the course of rhymed translation, the translator may be obliged to choose words which do not convey the true meaning of the source poem.

And to support her viewpoint she borrows Lefevere’s statements in this regard.

The translator may decide to settle for a very poor rhyming second best which, in the best case, rises to the level of assonance and in the worst only meaning to exhibit some faint resemblance to the sound at the end of the previous line.

D. Semantic Translation:

This method is faithful to the original text and author...This method attempts to present the style, syntactic structure the lexical words and the other aspects of the source poem to the readership.

E. Literal Translation:

The flaws of literal translation, however, and due to the fact that this method is too much concerned with faithfulness to the lexical meaning of the original text, a factor that leads to lack of creativity in translation. This method however, is appropriate for pretranslation but not for final revision of literary translation.
F. Communicative translation:

Communicative translation respects the structure and culture of the target language as well as the context of the source language text. The loss in using this method of translating poetry is less than the loss caused by using any other methods of translation. 28

Wissal quotes the following New Mark’s remarks:

Communicative translation addresses itself solely to second reader who does not anticipate difficulties or obscurities and would expect a generous transfer of foreign elements into his own culture as well as his language where necessary. 29

G. Poetry into prose:

This method of translation produces the poetic context while neglecting the poetic form of a translating poetry into prose allows translator to be more liberal in selecting the suitable words and expressions …In other words the translation is sometimes stiff and changed with words which may be semantically right, but lack of poetic significance of the original text. 30

For Wissal, all the previous translated methods are disregarded and proved inadequate to translate poetry and the most significant and proper translation methods are the following:

a. Interpretation:

Interpretation is one of the most significant methods used in rendering Poetry in target language. This method is what Lefevere calls “visions.” “Where the substance of the SL text is retained but the form is changed.” it aims to produce an individual poem in the
target language which is basically inspired by the original poem. The translator is more liberal in reproducing the source poem to be achieved by any kind of translation.\textsuperscript{31}

b. **Free translation:**

...It is a method of translation in which the translator makes use of all the other methods mentioned previously in order to achieve a good rendering of the original poem in the target language...By using more than one method, the translator is able to establish a fair solution to the problem found in the previous methods.\textsuperscript{32}

**Analysis of Selected Poems in The Book Of Sana’a**

After we have reviewed some ideas relating to poetry translation, the coming discussion will focus mainly upon the analysis of the poetry text book entitled *The Book of Sana’a* which consists of fifty six poems dedicated to Sana’a city. Every poem is filled with different humanitarian feelings. The poet sometimes is shown to be happy and jovial and sometimes depressed and disappointed. The language used in the original version is strong, updated, delicate, impressive and poetic as well, with a carefully highly cultured style. The poetic language of the poems are flooded with figurative of speeches such as similes, alliteration, images, symbols and metaphors. Skillfully, the poet turns the silent and the dead things to living and moving beings with their five senses. Here is Cumulus, not as a senseless and lifeless mountain but as a strong bodyguard protects Sana’a from her enemies. In the event, the clouds, with their charming clothes, had a short rest on the Cumulus’s shoulders then resume their journey to the unknown. The poems are charged
also with referential signs and specifics such as historical, geographical, cultural, religious and social date back thousands of years.

Based upon what has been said earlier, translation of these poems was a real challenge for the translators and a risky adventure. Nonetheless, translators proved to be courageous enough to accept that challenge in order to achieve their desired goal. The translators not only established that they were highly qualified in Arabic language, but also they were competent in its literature with all its sophisticated literary forms such as poetry, novel and the other related genres. Even those cultural based aspects, with their religious, historical, cultural and geographical roots, translators were keen to deal with them successfully for the translators provided a special notes of clarification for each poem. The translators should be appreciated and rewarded for their genius, perfect and creative work in translating these poems from Arabic into English. The fifty six poems or qasidahs, as the translators prefer to coin them, were rendered into English with the same poetic tone, the same poetic style and almost the same delicate language. The vocabulary items were carefully chosen to match those generated in the source language. The translation process was expressive, effective and close in meaning with the original. The foreign reader will find herself/himself face to face with qasidahs filled with lovely warm invitation to Sana’a. A last point is that the translation methods the translators follow in translating these poems were shifting between interpretation, free translation and literal translation in which the latter proved to be highly welcomed for its appropriateness to translate such a kind of unrhymed poetic style. Loyalty of the translators was almost equal between the TL text and the SL readership. And since the translation is
forwarded to the foreign reader, the translators supported their translation with fruitful supplementary annotations at the end of the text (P.279, The BS).

The coming analysis of the qasidahs will be presented in two parts. In the first one, analysis will focus on those positive points displayed in the translation process. In the second part, attention will be given to the limitations and flaws dictated in the translation process. Methods adopted here are the same methods the researcher established in the earlier literary works.

- Sana’a! capital of the spirit!
her gates are seven and paradise
Her gates are seven each gate will satisfy a desire for you traveler, and from whatever gate you have entered:
peace be upon you,
peace be upon Sana’a. (P.25, The BS).

In this first qasidah, a similar harmony is created between the translated text and the original one. Readers feel that harmony, touch it, and taste it through the carefully selected lexical items and the impressive rhythmical tone established by the translators. It is undoubted that the effectiveness of the original poem directly transfers to the translated text. However, it would be more appropriate if translators had changed two words and replaced them by others; “spirit” in line 2 and “traveler” in line 7. For the
first one could be replaced by “soul” and “traveler” by “stranger” to fit exactly what the poet meant. In the same qasidah, consider the following perfect translation through these strong and admired words:

Did she rain down from a book of mysteries?
Or did she rise up from the violet fields?
Or did some rhymes conjure her
from the spring of an ancient dream? (P.27, The BS).

In the original Arabic, it is hard for a reader to understand such a qasidah unless he/she has a good enough background in literature and in poetry in particular and also the language manipulated in the qasidah. Translators succeeded to go deep in reading the qasidah. As for the language, translators played the same game. Consider the following:

She guards a trove
of dreams in her depth
In the courtyards where lustrous wedding take place
Qasidahs are born from her rock,
But it is the color white that writes them
and the night that inscribes this story, weighed down
by clusters of melancholy
and braziers of perfume. (P.29, The BS).

In the above verses, though the thematic idea is too far to be reachable, translators were clever to dive deep and came out with intelligible translation.

• She was small as the size of my sadness.
at that time there were no insides inside her,
Neither teeth of rubber
Nor of iron.
How did she grow into the suburbs of my sadness
and costume eyeglasses?
How do ancient casbahs compete in red bed rooms
and with borrowed plume, besides? ! (P.55, The BS ).

In the above verses, the poet is worried about Sana’a and how it became big in size though it was “as small as the size of the poet’s sadness.” In the verses above, four words are taken directly from the Eastern based environment and employed skillfully in the context. The use of such words let the foreign reader understands the situation well. These words are: ‘don’, to put on, ‘costume’ which means typical clothes, casbahs which means historical castles, and ‘plume ’large feather.

- In the following verses from the seventh qasidah, the translators freed themselves from the literal method, otherwise, their translation would get off the track since the original text is pregnant with cultural and historical references, so translators recoursed to interpretation which is more appropriate in such cases with meaning reserved.

Ghamdan entices caravans from Syria,
From Egypt
And catches the late summer clouds from Persia,
Galloping clouds that relax on Ghamdan’s
Cushions
And sleep on his ledges.
at daybreak the sun hurries
to fill itself with Ghamdan’s charm.

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It tarries at nightfall. (P.57, The BS).

- The sun writes a silver melody
  in the reflection of ancient houses.
The melody doesn’t rust.
It tremolos blossom and becomes a garden
for the light
wings of affection
Havens for love.
“Sana’a is not houses”, the eyes say.
“Sana’a is music, the scent of jasmine from her Oriels.”
She sings when she is content,
She sings when she is heartbroken.
She flings her childhood to the clouds,
scatters fables to her folk and then sleeps
on a bed of qasidahs, guiding them to the ground.
(p.135, The BS).

How beautiful verses are and how perfect translation is. Translators choose words equivalent to the original, words that give life, energy, love and warmth. Translation proved to be close to the original in terms of theme and spirit.

- Like the phrase “it was”
disappearing behind the centuries,
Sana’a comes to you, pale
leaning on a crutch.
She doesn’t remember yesterday,
She doesn’t even remember today.
Her walls are decaying,
her bricks are flying away.
I read a death-rattle in her stones,
her windows tremble with fear.
I smell despair in the color of her eyes.
her eyes.
Even her eyes are fading. (P.150, The BS).

In the above verses, translators used different techniques; they summed up the verses instead of translating them. However, the message of the original is preserved.

- The voice of Maryam surprise me,
carving a scar into my memory,
digging wounds into my heart.
our dreams took the shape of Sana’a
to guard their beauty.
Maryam is a woman who never left her childhood.
when hunger wrapped its jaws around her guts,
She surrendered to her journey.
The wailing of her family, her family’s family!
grief extinguished the color of our candles
and dressed in a shroud of deep black.
Maryam classmates asked each other if she will be gone for a long time
Or if she might come back in the stillness
of night
carried on a bed of lily night.
Oh! Maryam, beautiful seraph,
wait here in the black of our
eyes! (P.219, The BS)

The translation above has achieved the following elements:

- Competency and creativity of the translators.

- Intelligibility of the translation and loyalty to the original. The present researcher wished that translators had replaced 'classmates' with the word 'peers' which will be more affective.

- A waif
  in desert rags
dusts of dusts on her eyelids
covered in clouds of sorrow.
This is the first Sana’a,
Who planted the foundation stones
of all civilization on the earth,
Who first battled with tyranny. (P.65, The BS)

In the above verses, the following observations are detected:

The translators start their translation with ‘A waif’ which means “a child or animal without home or enough food and care” while in the original poem must be ‘a bleeding body’. We don’t know if it is a mistake
committed by translators or the same word has another denotative meaning. Secondly, translators dropped two significant words in line 2, second verse. According to the original, the subject ‘she’ and a verb should follow the phrase ‘in desert rags she comes...’ thirdly, it is not obvious why translators repeat the noun ‘dust’, one time in singular and another time in plural while in the original the word ‘remaining’ should replace the word ‘dusts’. Fourthly, the phrase ‘covered in’, line 4 is not necessary since it is not mentioned in the original and in addition, line 4 is basically linked with the preceded line. There is connection between the two lines or verses. In line 5, ‘This is the first Sanaa’, such a phrase or verse gives a clue that there are many Sana’as. Finally, the word ‘first’ should change its position according to the original. So the new version might take the following form:

A bleeding body
in desert rags, she comes
remaining of dust on her eyelids
and clouds of sorrow.
This is Sana’a
Who first planted the foundation of stones.

• The woman of today who sees,
who reads:
she lights the candles for a new birth,
she searches in the handbags of time
for the names of mothers and grandmothers
the home is a home and not a grave
and women are women and not chattel. (p.71, The BS)

The verb 'see' above means 'think' not 'look' where the poet invites women
to share men education and the other social activities. In line 4, the phrase
'handbags of time' weakens the significance of the poem. Instead, another
valuable word could replace 'handbags, 'treasures' or 'secrets' for example.
In the last two lines, 'home and women' are repeated twice insignificantly.
They could be rendered thus:

  the home is not a grave
  and the woman is not a slave

- "The clefts in the chest of Mt. Ghamdan
  and Mt. Ayban
  deep caves that hide the tales of Sana’a
  from the tides of discovery.
  Acons are polished smooth on their slopes
  Of silent rock
  words flicker to life, only to die.
  Thrones are built, then they are obliterated.
  ..... Oh Sana’a...
  don’t lift your veil!
  neither the sun nor the moon
  shall read your fortune
  .....
In this cryptic qasidah” (P.73, The BS)

The following limitations are noticed:

First, in line 7 ‘words flicker to life, only to die’, no need to the word ‘life’ because ‘flicker’ itself indicates life since it is shining. Second, the word ‘only’ which comes with the phrase ‘only to die’ shows that ‘words flicker to life, only to die’, is in contrast with the original which says ‘words flicker then to vanish.’ In the second line, ‘Thrones are built, then they are obliterated’ while it is better to say, ‘Thrones are built, then to ruin’. Then we come to:

Oh Sana’a…

“Don’t lift your veil” In the original copy, it says
Oh Sana’a…

“A mistress refuses to remove her veil!”

Which means that Sana’a herself refuses to uncover her face. Then the next verse goes on:

Neither the sun nor the moon
Shall read your fortune.

And based on the change we have done so far in the earlier verses, the whole should be as the following:

Sana’a…
A mistress refuses to remove her veil
neither the sun
nor the moon
are allowed to read her secrets.

- There is a sky there too and lost qasidahs,
  Candles burning without fuel.
  There are windows there but nothing looks out
  of them
  Nothing except for the eyes of history
  The old woman from the neighborhood-
  still and silent. (P.79, The BS)

In the verses above from qasidah 12, repetition is noticeable in inappropriate situations rather; repetition helps to weaken the value of the poem. Look how many ‘theres’ and ‘nothings’. The above verses could be transmitted this way:

  There is a sky and wandering qasidahs,
  candles burning without fuel
  There are windows but nobody looks out of them
  except the eyes of history.

Interestingly, translators added the last verse to the poem which is not included in the original. Here is the additional verse:

  The old woman from neighborhood-
  still and silent.

- “When I was born, Sana’a was with me
  in my swaddling clothes.
in the morning’s milk I saw
the whiteness of her minarates
and domes.
when I abandoned this country,
I set for
a musky continent...
Sana’a was with me
in qasidahs filled with secret songs. (P.85, The BS )

Translating every word of the original sometimes doesn’t help translation to
be creative. Translators can approach the main idea without depending totally
on the literal translation method. The above translated verses from qasidah 14
are suffering from translating word by word in which finally the poem loses
its spirit and beauty. Consider the following retranslation:

When I was born, Sana’a was in my
swaddling clothes
In my morning’s milk, I saw
the whiteness of her minarates
and domes.
When I set for the musky continent
She was with me
in qasidahs filled with close-mouthed songs.

In the first line of the above translated verses, the phrase ‘with me’ could be
dropped since ‘swaddling clothes’ leads to the same meaning. Also in line 3,
the article, ‘the’ is might be dropped and placed ‘my’ instead since the
morning milk is restricted only to the poet. The phrase ‘abandoned this
country' is should be completely dropped for its insignificance. The phrase 'I set for' serves the purpose of 'abandoned this country'. The phrase 'secret songs' in the last line could be replaced by 'close-mouthed songs' for it is more pronounced and suitable.

- He remembers his days in the winter of his youth
  shivering
  barefoot.
  In his chest a voice yawns:
  it is a qasidah
  He hunts for them in songs that drift down
  from the oriels
  and condense into stone. (P.93, The BS)

In the first line of the above verses, translators changed 'childhood' into 'youth'. In line 4, the phrase 'In his chest a voice..' is a weak expression, its translation comes directly from the Arabic version. Poetry doesn't live in the chest of the poet. It should be said

  Inside him a voice yawns:
  It is a qasidah

In line 6 the phrase 'He hunts for...' is not understood. The subject 'He' refers back to the poet and the verb 'hunts' refers back to the 'qasidah' in the previous line. So, it seems to be like this:

  "He hunts it (qasidah) in songs that drift
down from the oriels."
• "Only the prettiest daughters
are entrusted with the "Daughter-of-the Dish",
to decorate it with sesame" (P.103, The BS)

Here, translators mix up between ‘daughters’ as girls and ‘Daughter’ as a
special Yemeni sweet dish served after meal. In the first, girls should be
replaced by ‘daughters’ because girls who prepare this kind of sweet. We say,
"Only the prettiest girls ..." In the second ‘Daughter’ is the name of the dish.
And to avoid confusion, translators should resort to transliterate this kind of
dessert and give it its local name instead of literal translation. Look the
difference:

(Only the prettiest girls
are entrusted with the "Bent al-Sahn"
to decorate it with sesame.

• "will not fade from the screen of my eye
or the ocean of my memory." (P.105, The BS)

Neither eyes have screens nor memory has an ocean. We use them in Arabic
but we don’t use them to mean their denotative sense or meaning. Here
‘screen’ means vision and ocean means room.

• "You cannot awaken me, you poet,
don’t try to invade my sleep!” (P.109, The BS )

It would be more acceptable to say:

You poet! Don’t awaken me,
don’t spoil my dreams”
• "I'm sorry, but she's already left.
  Typhoid cut short her blossoming, exquisite life"
  
  (P.109, The BS)

The phrase "I'm sorry" doesn't express the real sorrow of what happened to Maryam. She died of the Typhoid, so the effective expression should be,

  "Alas! She's already gone"

• In the following verses of qasidah 26, translators misled their readers and themselves too for they didn't dive deeply to the bottom meaning of the verses. The nature of the language increased the problem. Moreover, we don't know why they started their translation with a question statement.

  Where are the gardens of Sana’a?
  Dusty souqs have killed them,
  covered them with corruption.
  Nothing remains of their walls,
  no one marched in their funeral.
  no one cried.
  But her sparrows perch in the unwithered
memory
of her trees.(P.139, The BS )

According to the Arabic copy, the poem should start like the following:

  Sana’a’s gardens are shrinking
corruption replaced them by shops,
none of its walls didn’t march in their funeral
no one never cried
no one of her sparrows forget her trees.

- Forgive me if I saw in a dream
  that had no way in,
  and no way out.
  There stopped at each of your seven gates,
  a pig wiggles its tail in the face of Fate.
  Forgive me I saw you in another dream,
  a rigid corpse trailing a shroud,
  Hundred of babies pulling in your shroud
  from every side. (P. 153, The BS )

It is observed that translators dropped the original word ‘doves’ and put the word ‘fate’ with capital letter instead. Doves are always loveable birds and represent peace while ‘fate’ is completely different and also not within the context. In line 8, translators omitted a significant word ‘necked’ to show sorrow and fear. Therefore, the verses could be retranslated this way:

A pig wiggles its tail in the face of
doves
Hundreds of necked children are pulling on
your shroud
from every side.
A beautiful, pure morning

Oh Daughter of the Sun!

Nothing on my lips but the kiss
of words.

Nothing in my hand but the fading memory of mad love,
love out of control, I hid it in my blood,
sowed it under your necked feet.

Nothing in my sinews but a murmur I plucked
as you passed singing scales
under the windows of my house.

I came to scatter qasidahs between your hands.

I say: if you can wear the loneliness of my eye
and the crazeness of my heart,
be at peace, O peace. (P.161, The BS)

In qasidah 31 above, though the translation process was going on smoothly and successfully, some deviations are noticed resulting to different interpretation. For example, in line 2 of the above verses, an important phrase is dropped, 'forgive me' “Forgive me O Daughter of the sun” as an excuse introduced by the poet to Sana’a. In line 5, translators resorted to phrases actually out of the intended context and dropped a significant word appeared in the original. ‘fading memory’ and ‘love out of control’ are the two phrases inserted improperly. The word ‘bouquet’ is left out in spite of its importance.

Nothing in my hands but a bouquet
of mad love
was hidden in my blood
In line 8, 'song' has been changed into 'murmur', the phrase 'the singing scales of the song' has been changed into 'you', the phrase 'the windows of an old house' has been changed into 'the windows of my house'. In brief, the above verses can be rearranged thus:

A beautiful, pure morning
Forgive me O Daughter of the Sun!
Nothing on my lips but the kiss
of words.
Nothing in my hands but a bouquet of mad love,
hidden in my blood,
sowed it under your necked feet.
Nothing in my sinews but a song I plucked
its singing scales
as they passed under the window of
an old house.
I came to scatter its verses between your hands.
And I say to whom she wears the
Sadness of my eyes
And the longing of my heart
Peace be upon you
Peace be upon you.
Social Issues In Popular Yemeni Culture (Musid Wa Musida)

Introduction to Oral Literature

Oral literature has a long history with human kind. Like the other forms of speech, people use oral literature to express their ideas, beliefs and values. In a nut-shell, oral literature has emerged as an urgent need to express the man’s happy and sad moments. Oral literature regards the reliable eyewitness on the ups and downs man experiences. Oral literature as expressed by Lenda Degh, “the man’s natural companion throughout the history of civilization”\textsuperscript{33} The social issues raised by oral literature are not recorded in text books or scriptures, rather they are stored in the collective memory of the nations in order to be alive, memorable, fresh and easy to be handed over from one generation to another generation. To have a good idea about oral literature, Husamaddin Mustafa in his article, “Folklore...The Nation’s Memory: A Reading in the Egyptian’s Oral Literature”, writes, “Some literary scholars first limit oral tradition to that type of art transmitted through spoken medium, but later came the social anthropologists to broaden its implication to include the common man’s culture along with its traditions, customs, conventions and the other daily life activities linked to man’s life. Others defined oral literature as “that collective heritage resulted from the different human kind’s cumulative experiences the common man practiced and experienced”\textsuperscript{34} (my translation) Mustafa sees that there is an integration between two cultures, the one emerges from the common person’s perception and the one represents the modern civilization. He points out “Such a culture is not separable from the mainstream of man’s modern civilization. Both cultures reflect the whole thought of the human civilization.”\textsuperscript{35} (my translation)
And to show how close relationship between man and oral literature, Mustafa writes, “Oral literature is that type of tradition which reflects the innermost humanitarian depths via spoken language for its connection with language first invention, even earlier than writing. As long as language is a social oriented phenomenon, oral literature emerges to emphasis that phenomenon.”36 (my translation) William P. Morphy regards oral literature as a form of communication. He says, “A social group possesses a variety of communicative resources. The body movements and objects in a ritual and lines and colors of a painting are a few examples. Words, however, are chief resource. Oral literature is a form of communication which uses words in speech in a highly stylized artistic way. The distinction between the artistic use of words and ordinary is not always clear-cut. The starting point for demarcation, of course, is the conceptualization of linguistic forms by members of a culture.”37

For the interest of a fruitful discussion, it is better to stop for a while and start with the following definitions pertaining the term ‘tradition’ In his book Folk Culture and Oral Tradition, Sahablal Srivastava gives the following definitions: “The term ‘tradition’ has been derived from the Latin word ‘traditio’, meaning handing down, handing over, delivery, surrender etc. that is which handed down from generation to generation includes both the process and product”38 Robert Redfield sees that the word tradition connotes the act of handling down and what is handed down from generation to generation.39 Yogendra Singh defines tradition as the cumulative heritage of a society which permeates through all levels of social organization, for example, the value system, the social structure, and the structure of
personality. V. K. R. Rao looks upon tradition as habits, customs, attitudes, ways of life which get embodied in institutions and then tend to get frozen because of stability and autonomous existence of those institutions. Thus according to him tradition implies age and with it a fairly long period of continuity. R. V. Sampson explains tradition as 'a mode of behavior or standard produced by a group as distinct from an individual, and serves to intensify group consciousness and cohesion' Hence Srivastava and based on the previous definitions comes to the following logical conclusion: "...tradition which is cumulative social heritage in the form of habits, customs, attitudes and ways of life is transmitted from generation to generation either through written scriptures or through word of mouth. The tradition transmitted through word of mouth is called oral tradition" But to what extent oral literature's effect on human being? Or which is more effective on peoples' consciousness oral literature or written literature? To answer these questions, let us review some of what has been stated in this sense. "Oral literature, compared with written literature has many distinct features of its own. Whereas written literature is the outcome of the cultivated faculties of the artists, oral literature is a spontaneous outburst of the innermost feelings which emerge from the depths of the unconscious mind of the community. It is ever fresh and ever on the move like a river. All literature, oral or written, springs from life, but oral literature is a better projection of the innermost recesses of the social and cultural life of a society, its traditions, customs, habits, behavior, rites etc... The influence of oral literature does not confine itself only within the space mentioned earlier, it goes beyond to contemporary works of fiction according to J. M. Pedrosa. "
have come to the conclusion that oral literature created and, influences written literatures, including contemporary works of fiction in much more profound and decisive ways than is generally recognized. Additionally, oral literature affords scholars clear and transparent examples of different strategies for creating symbols, metaphors and motifs. The analysis of oral literature also sheds light on the aesthetic strategies of literary authors.

Stressed on the same point, Susan Slyomovics in her article “Arabic Folk Literature and Political Expression” writes, “Unlike written literature—whose received form and contents are, by virtue of being written, fixed—orally transmitted and preserved folk literature readily lends itself to spontaneous adaptation. As a result, such oral literature, no matter how traditional and familiar, frequently serves as a vehicle with which to express opinions about contemporary events. Such topical allusion is, in fact, one of the special pleasures an audience derives from oral performance.” In his invitation, “A Plea for an Interdisciplinary Approach to the Study of the Arab Oral Tradition” Saad A. Sowayan calls the Arab anthropologists and all those involved in social studies to widen the anthropological and psychological implications of the theory of oral-formulaic composition include not only an oral mode of composition but also an oral mode of thinking and the processes of oral discourse in general.” Sowayan goes on “The emphasis now on the examination of the structure and working of human memory and cognition and the means through which oral societies store, organize and retrieve knowledge, pass on their traditions, and maintain cultural continuity through successive generations...The scholarship of oral literature has crossed academic boundaries to straddle many disciplines, ranging from aesthetics to
linguistics to communication to psychology to anthropology to folklore and many more." Regarding the place oral literature occupies in the Arab World, Zaid Numan Mahir writes "The rich oral tradition in the Arab World is one of a collective imaginary and a reflection of the collective consciousness. Tales and stories have a twofold purpose. On the one hand, they provide entertainment to an audience so long accustomed to orality that they have developed a particular taste for, and an appreciation of, verbal imagery. On the other hand, tales respond to a variety of needs—cultural, social, religious, etc... that emerge constantly from the individual’s interaction with the surroundings, as well as from the influence of society on the individual. Tales also display concerns and dreams shared generally by human beings and particularly by certain communities at certain periods of time. Thus they find their echo in an audience willing to be part of the world of the tale being orally narrated. Moreover, tales have an educational effect in the Arab World, and the morality emerging from such tales serves as a model of correct behavior, not only for youth but also for adults who need to be reassured about their disciplines and creed." It would be more exciting to finalize this discussion with the following catchy storytelling event narrated long time back (1930s) in one of Baghdad’s coffee shops. Such a gripping episode reveals the influence the storytelling event on the audience in the Arab World.

Popular coffee shops in Baghdad used to hire a qassakhoun (or oral storyteller) to ‘read’ tales some of which, however, were humorous and funny. Most of the tales were about Abu Zaid al-Hilali, al-Zeer Salim, and other heroic characters. One night, at the suggestion of a classmate in ninth
grade, we went to a coffee shop called Dijla (or Tigris) overlooking the great river on the al-Russafa side. Around nine o’clock in the evening, the usual time for the reading of tales to begin, a number of the coffee shop customers were assembled inside, waiting for the event. The shop owner had the chairs rearranged in three successive bowlike rows in front of which, on the floor, he put a (wooden) board, 3 by 2 meters approximately. That board represented the stage. On it he put one single chair and a small table. A few minutes later, the oral storyteller arrived, dressed in a dishdasha (or men’s gown) and a zuboun (or men’s outdoor robe) over it; on his head there was a yashmagh (or men’s head scarf), worn according to a particular fashion called ‘tcharrawiya’ common in Baghdad. The qassakhoun was accompanied by two people: a young boy carrying a lantern and walking in front of his master, and a young man carrying a huge and thick book and walking by his master’s side. Welcomed by the coffee shop owner, the storyteller sat in his chair, with the book before him on the table. We moved from a space inside the café to the space occupied by the chairs, before the stage. At once the qassakhoun began his oral narration. His starting point was where he had stopped the night before. He described the heroic feats of Abu Zaid al-Hilali and arrived at a certain point that, however, seemed rather funny to me and my classmate.

But everyone was listening attentively. My classmate and I managed to learn by heart what exactly was said then. The qassakhoun’s narration went thus: “A great sand-storm blew and took over the whole land and region. Horse hooves sparkled with fire. Abu Zaid drew his sword and hit at his enemy, yet the enemy received the sword with his zerdiya (or shield). Abu Zaid then hit with his spear at the enemy’s chest, but the latter received the
blow with the dirga (or coat of mail). At last Abu Zaid managed to strike his enemy who, under the mighty blow, was hurled to the ground. Soon one of the attendants informed the police; shortly afterwards, the police arrived at the fight-scene, arrested Abu Zaid, and took him to jail.” Here the qassakhoun, having been ‘reading’ for about an hour and a half, stopped. He closed his book, thankfully praised Allah, and left the coffee shop as he had come in.

On that same night, one of the audiences could not sleep. He tossed in his bed, as we were told, restlessly for some time; impatient, he left his house in the middle of the night. He was seen carrying a hatchet on his way to the qassakhoun’s house. It was after midnight when the man knocked fiercely and noisily at the door. A few minutes later, the door was opened and the storyteller came out, dressed in his night (sleeping) gown. Disquieted and concerned, for never before had he been visited at that time of the night, he grew anxious at the sight of the hatchet. The neighbors' doors and windows were opened. Putting this together, the narrator realized that his midnight visitor must have been one of that night’s auditors at the coffee shop. “What’s wrong?” he asked. In an angry tone the visitor answered: “How can I sleep, and how could you sleep, while Abu Zaid was in prison?” Surprised but obviously practically skilled enough to solve such a problem, the qassakhoun replied: “Oh, is that why you are dismayed? Don’t worry, man; it’s quite simple. But will you wait for a moment here? I’ll come back soon.” Inside went the storyteller; a few seconds later, he came back with the huge book in his hands. Under the light of the lantern, with the neighbors watching, he started reading the next episode in the sequence of events of the story, that is, after the arrest-scene. Briefly he ended up his reading with the following
sentence: “Some of Abu Zaid’s friends then went to see the ruler of the country. Mediating for their friend, they praised the latter’s noble qualities and distinct bravery and prowess in times of war. The ruler was convinced and decided to set Abu Zaid free.” Relieved and reassured, the visitor praised the qassakhoun’s moral disposition and common sense and went back home.50

This episode clearly reveals how gripping the act of oral storytelling must have been to the audience in the Arab world. It also indicates the extent to which an auditor could go in his spontaneous reaction to the narrative event. That auditor-midnight visitor must have been so interactively involved in the oral performance that his own moral code, itself a reflection and a continuation of a long-inherited, general moral code, ultimately took over and prevented him from dealing with the story as an imaginary work and waiting for its sequential action. Hence the impact that story, and many such stories, had as an oral tradition upon the listening public in the Arab world.

Musid Wa Musida

The Author

Abdulrahman Ahmad Mutahar was born in Sana’a in 1943. He earned his secondary education in 1961 from Cairo, Egypt. He started his work in the Radio Sana’a as a children programme presenter and producer. He issued the first children monthly newspaper in 1981. In 1997, he was rewarded ‘The Distinction Prize at the Shareja Festival, United Arab Emirates. Abdulrahman Mutahar wrote numerous tales, plays, and songs targeting children. He became very famous for his daily radio series programme ‘Musid Wa
Musida' in which he criticizes some negative social dominated phenomena and other positive perspectives are rewarded and considered.

All that has been established through stern criticism, irony and humorous sense. And in order the anecdotes to be more serious and more authentic, they are supported by citations from the Quran, sayings from the prophet and proverbs. The episodes are being delivered through the Sana’ani dialect which attracts listeners from different walks of life for its charming and peculiar sound characteristics.

**Significance of the Radio Programme (Musid Wa Musida)**

Regarding the significance of the textbook, Frances Guy, the ambassador of the United Kingdom to Yemen, in her preface to the copy writes:

“This book, Social Issues in Popular Yemeni Culture ...is the result of a meeting between the Yemeni radio author, Abdulrahman Mutahar...and the British academic Dr. Janet C.E. Watson...In this book, they bring together shared ideas on a number of social concerns and issues.”

Frances Guy views that Janet Watson has produced a text which will help learners of English, on one hand, and provide English speakers with the linguistic means to appreciate many issues of social importance in Yemen today, on the other hand. But what is the real motive of the translator? In her introduction to the book, Watson says: “The subject matter and the reception the programme received from Yemenis of all walks of life convinced me, however of the need to document episodes in Arabic and English and produce a lasting work
which would be benefit to Arabic and English speakers alike. For the
themes of the episodes, Watson sees that the episodes fall under four major
themes; education, health, the environment and justice.

"The episodes all deal with contemporary life—either because treat
ongoing issues, or because they relate to a specific event or date, such as the
first local elections."

According to Watson, the episodes are divided into two parts
entertaining as well as didactic. And the success of the educational message is
due to the art form in which it is wrapped. The listeners can recognize a part
of themselves in the characters of Musid Wa Musida, and feel that the
message is directed personally at them. Watson goes on:

"The entertainment value is enhanced by an acceptable degree of
exaggeration and by unexpected twists in the dialogue: in ‘More haste, less
speed’, in mock innocence and real hurt, asks what he has done...The
didactic element of the programme is enhanced by citations from Yemeni
sayings, proverbs, poetry and songs as well as sayings from the prophet and
verses from the Quran. And commenting on the language and the structure
of the episodes, Dr. Watson points out: "The language of the episodes help to
fulfill the didactic goal of the programme. The language is Yemeni, and
mainly Sana’ani Arabic. The audience can hear their sisters and brothers
talking in the characters of Musid and Musida, and know that this is a
Yemeni production. They laugh at the pitch, the intonation, the irony and the
dead-pan humor. And whether the genre of Musid and Musida is a soap or
a serial, Watson says: "Neither a serial nor a soap, Musid Wa Musida had
moulded its own very Arabic genre drawing on traditional Arabic literary devices. It has the characters of the soap opera or serial, but unlike both, each episode is complete in itself and is marked by resolution. And unlike in soap operas and serials, the characters no fixed identity other than being Yemeni, being married to each other and voicing issues of specific relevance to Yemen. Actually, the popularity of the Radio series programme Musid Wa Musida is not only welcomed by the towns dwellers, it is also appreciated by those who live in remote areas of the countryside. Furthermore, the programme aims not only at particular sections of the society, rather, it speaks to all Yemenis regardless of their social background. In this regard, Watson writes:

"Yemenis from different backgrounds consider that the characters of Musid and Musida are speaking to them or for them. At a woman’s party in Sana’a, a woman said I should ask abdulrahman Mutahar to write about her relative’s experience with his wife’s family...Musid Wa Musida is a Yemeni art form for a Yemeni audience which aims to solve problems in Yemeni society. Its success and popularity is due to a felicitous convergence of entertainment, education, and a solid grounding in Yemen history, culture and religion." Commenting on her translation method and how she overcame the various problematic difficulties she faced while translating the textbook, she writes:

"Each episode is transcribed in Arabic script, translated into idiomatic English and illustrated in cartoon form. To keep the book accessible to as wide an audience as possible, I have kept endnotes to a minimum: proverbs
and sayings which are explained or listed in other available publications are referenced in the Arabic texts and in English translations where the translation of the proverb is at least semi-literal;...endnotes are also used to explain the origin of certain place names or stories behind sayings. The English is presented in as colloquial and communicative form as possible” 59

And to sum up the translation methods the translator used to fulfill her translation process, she did the following:

- Endnotes are added to explain the source text to the target audience.
- Translation is presented in a colloquial form similar to the source form.
- The translation communicative method is used for its appropriateness overcoming the gaps emerge between the two unmatched languages.
- Proverbs and sayings have been translated by equivalent proverbs and those resist to have their equivalents, translated semi-literally.
- And for the difficulty of some Arabic proverbs and sayings, they were left untranslatable. “I faced several difficulties in the translation, particularly in the rendering of insults during the course of arguments, in the use of irony and the use of idioms. Arabic has a number of insults whose level of rudeness hovers around the mild rebuke. English insults are generally speaking are unpublishable” 60

Standard Language vs. Dialect Language

In the view of what had been cited so far a set of serious questions such as the followings, might be raised here, “To what extent the present translator succeeded to achieve her intended goal in translating the textbook,
particularly the work she had translated relates to a Sana’ani dialect rather than a standard language? Is dialect a part of standard language?” The following preview will explore answers for the questions raised earlier.

In his thesis entitled *Some Lexical and Cultural Problems in the Translation of Dialects: The Case of Sana’ani Arabic With Reference to Social Issues in Popular Yemeni Culture*, Abdulrahman Al-Tal provides us with the following definitions for both language and dialect and the difference between them. Al-tal borrows the definitions of Hudson who distinguishes the terms on the ground of two distinct criteria. “One is ‘size’ which is based on the fact that language is larger than dialect in terms of the number of lexems it contains, for instance, the English language contains all the terms in dialects (like Yorkshire English) as well as “Standard English” as one dialect among these dialects.”

Second is the distinction of ‘prestige’. This distinction is based on the assumption that a language has a prestige which a dialect lacks. This is because the standard language is used in formal writing whereas the unwritten language is referred to as a dialect. Furthermore, Hudson makes use of another criteria “mutual intelligibility” to differentiate between ‘language’ and ‘dialect.’ He argues that “if the speakers of two different varieties understand each other, then the varieties concerned are instances of the same language; otherwise they are not.” Al-tal enumerates five different types of dialects: regional, temporal, social, standard and idiolect.
1- **Regional Dialect**: according to Hartman and Stork “A regional dialect... as a variety of language spoken by the people of particular geographical area within a speech community”.

2- **Temporal Dialect**: “…is a variety of language used at a particular stage in its historical development, e.g. mid-19th century British English... This is reflected in temporal dialects which can only be understood by examining the written records indicating the changes that have taken place.”

3- **Social Dialect**: A social dialect is a variety of language spoken by the members of a particular group or stratum of a speech community.

4- **Standard Dialect**: “The socially flavored variety of a language often based on the speech of the educated population in and around the cultural and/or political center of the speech community. Such standard... dialects are imitated and used as auxiliary by speakers of other regional and social dialects for the purpose of formal discourse and writing as well as teaching the language to foreigners.”

5- **Idiolect**: An idiolect is “a variety of language used by an individual speaker, including peculiarities of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary” It also refers to specific ways in which an individual uses language.

And for the problems pertaining the translation of dialects, Al-Tal groups them under two categories; problems come from lexical oriented backgrounds and problems come via cultural specifics elements. Under the first category come: synonyms, homonyms and lexical repetition. And under
the cultural-specific problems are: food, clothes and other social events, customs, activities.\textsuperscript{68}

Going back to the question raised earlier "To what extent the translator succeeded to translate the present textbook though it relates to a Sana’ani Arabic dialect? The immediate answer for this question will be:

The translator’s creativeness and success were based upon the following reasons:

1- Her deep knowledge in the standard Arabic language.

2- Her long stay in Yemen as an academic and linguistic researcher enabled her mastering Yemeni dialects, particularly, the Sana’ani one.

3- Her stay in the Sana’a Old City enabled her to be a member of the local community by attending their various social, religious, and cultural activities such as weddings, religious ceremonies and social festivals. And based on the points listed above, Dr Watson was not only the translator of the textbook, but she edited and annotated the work too.

Analysis of Selected Episodes in (Musid Wa Musida)

As it has been said beforehand that the anecdotes center around typical Yemeni problems occurring probably everyday, the radio series programme devotes itself to show them, discuss their minus sequences and then suggest the proper solutions. The process goes through an encounter argument between two stage husband and wife, Musid Wa Musida. The language the
two characters speak takes the form of day-today language which is more acceptable than the standard language. Humor sense, jokes and playing with words play a major part in the programme. However, in spite of the language intelligibility, it is burdensome with cultural specific elements. What is the important point for us is to show the translator's creativity fulfilling her perfect work in translation. As a matter of fact the translator of this textbook proved to be—as it is commonly said- more royalist than the king. To be more specific, the translator proved to be more proficient not in translating only this textbook nor her mastering the standard Arabic language but proved to be very knowledgeable about Yemeni dialects which are more challenging to Yemenis themselves. Not only this, but she has shown her deep knowledge and understanding in the Yemeni culture too. Her qualified architect in mastering both languages (the SL and TL) results to a great translation. The following instances show just the least of her skilful creativity.

• “Who he marries his daughter off gives her away” (P.50, SIPYC)

من زوج زحل (قضايا إجتماعية، 48)

This Sana’ani proverb reflects the great responsibility of parents towards their children fostering, especially daughters. But as soon as the girl is married, the burden transfers to the husband’s side, so parents become happy for their daughters are happy and they have their own independent families. The translator was successful enough first to understand the implying meaning of the local Sana’ani dialect, and secondly, she could find out the proper equivalent of the target language. The meaning of the original text is preserved in the translation.
• “Anyone who relies on someone’s sauce can expect to eat their food dry.” (P.51, SIPYC)

ومن ركن على سيغ الناس أكلها يابسة" (قضايا إجتماعية، 49)

This proverb is really challenging the translator, however it is translated literally and the hidden meaning reaches the mind of the foreign receptor successfully. The proverb’s connotative meaning is that those who are waiting for the others’ help are mistaken, otherwise, they should depend on themselves.

• “If you can’t figure away out before you go in you’ll stuck before you know it.” (P.51, SIPYC)

الذي ما يقايس خرجته قبل دخلته يحبن ومايدري" (قضايا إجتماعية، 49)

Another success scored by the translator in translating the above proverb. Clearly, the translator follows the literal method, otherwise no any available. The meaning of this proverb simply means people must think carefully before they start doing anything, otherwise consequences would be very serious.

• “But their dreams were dashed by the consequences of this exchange marriage.” (P. 62, SIPYC)

ما مليح إلا وحمى" (قضايا إجتماعية، 61)

This Sana’ani proverb in this context deals with a serious social problem; that is the exchange marriage in Yemen, when two members of two different families agree to marry off each other’s sister for example which
proved its failure owing to the problems which started between the two families and ends drastically.

The proverb by itself means ‘nothing is perfect’. The translator, and due to the lack of an equivalent proverb in the target language resorts to the communicative translation which is the proper method in such cases.

- “His wife had had enough of him and refused point blank to go back, even if a Third World War broke out.” (P.63, SIPYC)

Look how the element of exaggeration in these episodes plays an important role. This kind of Sana’ani dialectical style adds humorous color and special taste to the conversation between Musid and Musida in order to pay the listener’s attention and keep him/her following. The original source is retained and full meaning transferred to the foreign audience. Inserting the phrase ‘a third world war’ in the translation text helps to reflect the same impact of the source text.

- “He doesn’t need help from the state or the United Nations. You’re his father and it is more important that you help him than any other, Tom, Dick or Harry.” (P.72, SIPYC).

Sometimes Musida tries her best to convince Musid to do something but he gives her his deaf ear, so she ends her statement with words reflecting
her anger and disappointment. Such local color words can be coined as non-sense words. Equivalent words are repeated in the translation text successfully. Again the element of exaggeration is still present to show the dialogues’ live, funny and humorous nature.

• ‘The United Nations’ phrase is used just to add more taste and flavor. Tom, Dick and Harry are used to match the non-sense words came in the source copy.

• “Jump to hell with the consequences.” (P. 76, SIPYC)

The above proverb is very funny for it is impregnated with humorous, sarcasm and criticism at the same time. It mocks those kind of people who don’t use their minds to analyze their problems and asking only for ready made solutions. And to be close to meaning, the proverb could be much better if it is rendered like the following:

“Jump and whatever the results are.”

The word ‘hell’ is added by the translator in the translated text above.

• “Then your son takes his wife on a trip and doesn’t come back until he’s invited his wife’s family, your family, my family and all the other relatives and every other Tom, Dick and Harry to come over for lunch.” (P. 79, SIPYC)
As it is stated earlier that Musid and Musida utter words meaninglessly just to add a humor sense to their argument and to express their disagreement on some disputed issues. Again, we are encountered the non-sense words; Tom, Dick and Harry, names for non real people. The translation is successful, meaning is clear and the effectiveness of the message in the target language is maintained.

This following situation is linked to the previous one. When the new couple invited both their family members for lunch, the groom’s parents were upset, claiming that they can’t feed these so many people.

- “I can’t even get lunch for the people in the house. I’m hardly likely to invite a whole army along.” (P. 79, SIPYC)

لا شغبيهم ولا معي ضيوف ولا حلفت على أحد! ما عاد بين أقدر أسوي غدا لأهل البيت عاذا شاحلف على الجيش العرمرمي هذا” (قضايا إجتماعية, 78)

The word ‘army’ is added to make the listeners laugh.

- “Don’t talk about debt, Musida. I’m up to my ears” (P. 87, SIPYC)

مالةدين يا مسعدة... قد لا الرقبة” (قضايا إجتماعية, 86)

The difference between the two texts is that the Arabic copy mentions the word ‘neck’ ‘up to my neck’ while the translation text replaces ‘neck’ to ‘ears’ which is natural and leads to the same meaning.

- “You can’t tell a good person, even if they’re wrapped in a bin liner.” (P. 87, SIPYC)
The only difference between the two texts is the two different cultural words used differently. The word ‘shamla’, which is a long loss thick body cover made of the animal skins which gives warmth in winter. This Yemeni made ‘shamla’ is replaced by the phrase ‘a bin liner’ which might be a cultural equivalent to shamla. The underlying meaning of the proverb is that wearing costly clothes is not everything but good behavior and simplicity is the branded mark of people.

- The statement that will follow comes totally against its real denotation, and that is what we call ‘playing with words’ in these series episodes. The statement is voiced by Musida who repeatedly criticizes Musid’s qat bad habit. She wants to say that Musid, as a father and husband doesn’t care about the family’s basic supplies, rather, he spends most of his salary purchasing qat.

“Whenever people see Musid in the qat suk, they congratulate his family.” (P. 87, SIPYC)

The suggested meaning of the above statement is whenever people see Musid in the market, they congratulate his family.

Such a statement seems to be difficult for the target text receptor to understand.
• “When life becomes miserable, they say, you should fluff your pillow.” (P. 87, SIPYC)

"لقد العيشة نفث زد وضع المرقد" (قضايا إجتماعية, 85)

The translation is clear in the above text.

• “Not everyone has ridden a horse can call himself a rider” (P. 104 SIPYC)

The above proverb is almost universally known irrespective of different cultures.

• “Now you can jolly well go and fetch the boy from your brother, otherwise, I’ll go and drag him back by the scruff of his neck.” (P. 153, SIPYC)

"هيا اسلم انت وأخوك، لكن قوم اسرح ادي الولد من عند أخوك وان ماهي فانا عد أسرح بنفسي أسحبه بنخره" (قضايا إجتماعية, 151)

Musida’s son is in his uncle house to learn music. Musida is very upset of his regular absence, so she asks his father to go and bring him back, otherwise, she will go and drag him by his nose. The translation text is matching the source one except in one thing. In the original text, it says, ‘I’ll drag him back by his nose, while the translation text says ‘I’ll drag him back by the scruff of his neck’.

• “Our neighbor Muslih’s son is so naïve” (P. 160, SIPYC)

"وابن جارنا الحج مصلح ولد عاده زنجبيل بفباره" (قضايا إجتماعية, 158)
The meaning of the above proverb in this context denotes those youngsters who are still at the beginning of their life and still don’t experience it yet. The translator’s translation is really expressed.

- Carrying weapons, such as pistols and machineguns is a bad habit in Yemen, especially among youngsters. Such a dangerous social phenomena took many innocent lives.

  “Adolescents think carrying a pistol displays courage and heroism” (P. 160, SIPYC)

It is noticed that two names for famous Arabs mentioned in the original copy for their bravery and heroism in the remote history are not repeated in the translated text avoiding ambiguity and well done the translator.

- “That’s right, between me and you, some people look out for calamities to befall their relative and gloat when something happens.” (P. 99, SIPYC)

  The phrase ‘between me and you’ creates ambiguity in the translated text. This kind of expression is probably borrowed directly from the Arabic spoken language due to interference. Such an expression sounds strange since it is not used in English, spoken or written language. It would be much better to replace this expression with ‘for your information’.

- “How many friends you have when you count them but in time of misfortune how few.” (P. 99, SIPYC)
The above translated text is a verse of a long poem composed in standard Arabic. The poet said that verse after he had experienced many of his friends and found most of them unfaithful. The translator fails to show even the least of its meaning. It would be better if it is translated in another way or leave it untranslatable. The following proverb corresponds the above verse and gives the same meaning.

"A friend in need is a friend indeed."

- "No one in her family has a beard we could pull." (P.103, SIPYC)

The above Sana’ani proverb is comical and has a deep social meaning too. The following example will explain the proverb. Musida’s daughter in-law left her in-laws’house and went to her family’s house. Musida and Musid went to bring her back but for their surprise no one listen to them, especially the father himself who should convince his daughter to go back with her in-laws. The translation of the verb is ambiguous owing to its literal translation and also the difficulty to find out a correspondent equivalent from the other culture. The ambiguity stems from the phrase ‘a beard to pull’. It would be much better if the proverb is rendered as:

"... and no, in her family, one to refer to."

Or "...and no, in her family a wise person to refer to."

- "The snake charmer will meet his fate through the snake." (P.112, SIPYC)
Another funny Sana’ani proverb and another weak translation. This proverb carries a connotative meaning. Briefly, it means anyone creates problems for the people, he himself is bound to be a victim of his dirty games. It seems that the proverb is translated through explanation in which it loses its underlying meaning. The suggested translation could be like this:

“The snake’s catcher will find himself the snake’s victim.”

Or “The end of the snake’s catcher is a snake’s bite.”

• “They think that if someone else does something dangerous, it gives the right to do it as well.” (P. 111, SIPYC)

• “They say if you talk to someone for one hour, they only remember five minutes of what you say.” (P. 111, SIPYC)

It could be said that the translator did her best to translate this difficult proverb but her efforts went in vain. She also tried to translate it communicatively in order to grasp its meaning but still in vain. The following translation is to be acceptable and understandable too.

“If you’re in Rome, do as the Romans do.”

Look how long the translated text is and how short the original is! Such a length gives a clue that the translator faced many challenges translating the Sana’ani proverbs, sayings and idioms. The above proverb can
be understood much better if it is translated this way:

"The more you talk to him, the less he understands."

"The reality of the situation is that your son is without a job and is worried that he’ll have lines on his forehead before he gets married." (P. 127, SIPYC)

"الواقع ان ابنه بدون وظيفة ومتفاجع لتتلون جبهاته وعادوه بدون زواجه" (قضايا إجتماعية، 125)

The above translation is an exact copy of the Sana’ani Arabic dialect. The text is rendered literally. It would be better if the translator translates it communicatively such as the following:

"He’s worried for the time is passing away and he is still unmarried."

- "Let my father die, so I can wrap myself in his rug." (P. 126, SIPYC)

"يا الله يموت أبي أدى يشتدله" (قضايا إجتماعية، 124)

Such a proverb is said when a young man wishes his father dies to inherit him after death and be the first person in the family. The word ‘rug’ denotes inheritance. The question is ‘Can the foreign cultural receptor make a close relationship between ‘rug’ and ‘inheritance’? It is impossible. And to improve the translation, it could be retranslated thus:

"I wish my father dies to replace his position."

Or  "I wish my father dies to take his place."

- "Son, one day you’ll have your own son" (P. 134, SIPYC)
It would be better this way

"You are a son today a father tomorrow."

• "Don’t be stupid" (P.134, SIPYC)

• "And there you’re leaping into the deep end before you have learnt how to swim" (P. 134, SIPYC)

The above saying is said to someone rushing to do something without thinking of the results. However, that saying would be much understandable if it appears like the following:

"Hop into the deep without thinking."

Or "Think before you ink."

• "Have you no eyes in your head, or were you gazing at the stars?" (P. 204, SIPYC)

The present research scholar wished that the translator had stuck to the original copy and translate the text as it appears in the original without change since there is much loss in the translated text. The most significant thing
which was lost is the humorous element the original copy carries. Accordingly, the translation of the text would be like this

"Have you no eyes in your head, or were you counting stars in the sky?"
NOTES


2. Ibid., p.317.


4. Ibid., p.204.

5. Ibid., p.205.

6. Ibid., p.204.

7. Ibid., p.205.


11. Ibid., p. 99.


14. Ibid., p. 79.

15. Ibid., p. 80.

16. Ibid., p. 81.
17. Ibid., p. 81.
18. Ibid., p. 84.
20. Ibid., p. 49-50.
24. Ibid., p. 15.
25. Ibid., p. 15.
26. Ibid., p. 16.
27. Ibid., p. 17-18.
28. Ibid., p. 20.
29. Ibid., p. 21.
30. Ibid., p. 20-1.
31. Ibid., p. 21-22.
32. Ibid., p. 23.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
39. Ibid. p. 9.
40. Ibid. p. 9.
41. Ibid. p. 10.
42. Ibid. p. 10.
43. Ibid. p. 11.
44. Panjabilok Journal [http://www.punjabstate.com].
46. Susan Slyomovics. “Arabic Folk Literature and Political Expression” *Arabic Studies Quarterly* (vol. 8, No.2) p.178.
48. Ibid. p. 133.
50. (The episode was borrowed from Zaid Numan Mahir’s thesis mentioned above).
53. Ibid., p. 16.
54. Ibid., p. 17.
55. Ibid., p. 17.
56. Ibid., p. 18.
57. Ibid., p. 18.
58. Ibid., p. 19.
59. Ibid., p. 20.
60. Ibid., p. 20-1.
62. Ibid., p.6.
63. Ibid., p. 7.
64. Ibid., p. 9
65. Ibid., p. 9.
66. Ibid., p. 12.
68. Ibid., p. 22-9.