# Does it speak? Does it sing?[1]
# Est-ce que ça parle ? Est-ce que ça chante ?

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**Abstract :** *'Each language [...] possesses certain special devices for intensifying the overtones of words. While the resulting effect will be semantic, the devices themselves may be phonological, lexical or grammatical'. Verse 75 of Ṭarafa's Mu'allaqa uses these three devices of intensification to foreground the poet's appeal. The verse is remarkably alliterative and assonant, it uses affective lexical aspects and its syntactic composition reflects a contrastive parallelism. As this article resists to Silvestre de Sacy's claim, it attempts to evaluate a corpus of fourteen English and French translations of Ṭarafa's verse. Evaluation is exercised with the application of three criteria established in a forthcoming work by the author of this article: the mode of discourse criterion, the skopos criterion and the function-based criterion. It is also done at two main levels : the translations are compared to the ST and then to each other when similarities, influences and/or differences are perceived. The conclusion reveals that a translation is evaluated positively not only when it 'speaks' the ST, but also when it 'sings' it. This explains the choice of the title of the article.*

**Key words :** *Translation,* Mu'allaqāt, *sound schemes, criteria of evaluation, polyptoton, parallelism, style, tempo, tone.*

**Résumé :** *« Chaque langage a des procédés propres à intensifier les nuances et tonalités des mots. Leurs effets se verront autant sur le plan sémantique, que phonologique, lexical ou grammatical ». Il se trouve précisément que le vers 75 de la Mu'allaqa de Ṭarafa a comme caractéristiques majeures ces trois procédés d'intensification mettant ainsi au premier plan la voix du poète. Le vers, remarquablement allitératif et assonant, est enrichi d'un vocabulaire affectif et sa charpente syntaxique reflète un parallélisme contrastif. S'écartant d'une idée limitative de Silvestre de Sacy[2], cet article tente d'évaluer un corpus de quatorze traductions à la fois anglaises et françaises d'un vers de Ṭarafa. L'évaluation s'exerce grâce à l'application de trois critères : le mode discursif, le mode du skopos et celui du fonctionnement de base, que nous établirons au cours d'un prochain travail[3]. Elle se construit sur deux niveaux différents : les traductions sont comparées aux mêmes textes, puis entre elles lorsque sont perçues des similitudes, influences et/ou différences. Le bilan de ce travail montre que la traduction est évaluée positivement, non seulement quand elle parle, mais aussi quand elle chante. Cette recherche explique le choix du titre.*

**Mots -clés :** *Traduction,* Mu'allaqāt, *procédés sonores, critères d'évaluation, polyptoton, parallélisme, style, tempo, ton.*

## Introduction

The present article adopts as its point of departure Ullmann's assertion that "each language […] possesses certain special devices for intensifying the overtones of words. While the resulting effect will be semantic, the devices themselves may be phonological, lexical or grammatical" (193 : 53). For Ullmann, "words can be "motivated" in three different ways: phonetically, morphologically and semantically. Each of these processes can have powerful stylistic implications" (Ibid : 42). As he expands upon phonetic motivation, Ullmann notes that "onomatopoeia, sound symbolism, phone esthetic effects and kindred phenomena are part of the very fabric of poetry" (Ibid : 43).

As he restricts his arguments about overtones, Ullmann explains that some processes of 'word formation' result in 'overtones of meaning' (ibid : 51). Ṣafadī and Ḥāwī follow a similar vein when they note that the roots of words in Arabic are but musical symbols that reflect the speaker's inner psyche in a specific situation or condition or point of view (1974 : 21). Ṣafadī and Ḥāwī add that the modification of these roots by means of vowels is a specification of the primary sounds by coloring them according to the conditions that the verb is related to, the temporal setting, and the change of the speaker's point of view. The language used in Arabic poetry is for them made to be sonorant or to link a symbol to a poet's suffering (Ibid : 22). Blachère already drew his reader's attention to the fact that contrary to 'nos poésies occidentales qui, dans leur ligne générale, sont avant tout "intellectualistes," la poésie arabe est primordialement musique et résonance' (1958 : 11).

Verse 75 of Ṭarafa's *Mu'allaqa*[4] is remarkably rich in terms of the sound-based schemes that it employs. The rhetorical function of these schemes is to build an antithetical parallelism that ties both hemistichs to each other. Their communicative function is for Ṭarafa, the poet, to comment on a disagreement between him and one of his cousins by advocating his innocence and at the same time expanding upon the injustice exercised against him by his cousin and the rest of his tribe:

> *bilā ḥadathin aḥdathtuhu wa kamuḥdathin*[5]
> *hijā'ī wa qadhfī bi al-shakātī wa muṭradī* [6]

In the first hemistich, Ṭarafa advocates his innocence by claiming that he has never committed any bad deeds; *ḥadath*. The root of this word is repeated in the same context in words that exhibit different morphological patterns, which results in the creation of a polyptoton ('ḥadathin,' 'aḥdathtuhu' and 'muḥdathin'). This polyptoton gives way to a remarkably alliterative hemistich by means of the repetition of the sounds /ħ/ and /θ/. Both are voiceless fricative obstruent consonants[7]. As he classifies consonants in a scale of ascending hardness, Leech enters fricatives second in a group of four, which implies their being rather soft consonants (1984 : 98)[8]. Such softness is counterbalanced in these two alliterative consonant sounds by the absence of voice in them. For Leech, 'the presence of voice […] tends to suggest softness' (Ibid : 99). Ṭarafa makes this combination between hardness and softness in the alliterative sounds of the first hemistich demonstrably functional. This communicates, indeed,

both the feelings of injustice and of bitterness that he suffers from, which is the function of the polyptoton.

In the second hemistich, Ṭarafa goes through details of the injustice exercised against him. This, he says, lies in defamation, complaint and dismissal. Like the first hemistich, the second one is remarkably sonorous. To begin with, Ṭarafa uses long vowel sounds, which matches the agony and suffering with which he describes his tribe's injustice towards him. Internal rhyme also characterizes the second hemistich at two dimensions. Firstly, '*hijā'ī*' and '*šakātī*' terminate with two identical vowel sounds. Secondly, '*hijā'ī*,' '*qadhfī*' '*šakātī*' and '*muṭradī*' close all with the same vowel sound, which is the same rhyme sound of all the *Mu'allaqa*. As he researches semantic universals, Ullmann proves 'the "symbolic value" of the vowel /i/ as an expression of smallness' (1964 : 69). In this verse, Ṭarafa complains, indeed, of his being belittled of his tribesmen.

Though both hemistiches agree in their use of sound schemes and affective lexical aspects, they stand at opposite pole in at least three levels. The first lies in the sound patterns used. Whereas the first hemistich is basically alliterative, the second is rather assonate. The second contrast is perceived in the paradox between the poet's claimed innocence and the injustice exercised against him. The third contrast lies in the fact that whereas the first hemistich uses the same root but in different morphological patterns, which gives illusion of the fact that the mal-deed, if any, is rather one, the second hemistich enumerates three punishments, which helps convince the receiver that the poet is definitely oppressed.

The details presented above about verse 75 of Ṭarafa's *Mu'allaqa* make it clear that the exercise of translating such a work is by no means simple. Being aware of such condensed richness in pre-Islamic poetry in general, Silvestre de Sacy notes that 'quiconque ne lira les compositions des poètes les plus célèbres de l'Arabie que dans des traductions latines ou françaises, sera bien loin de pouvoir les apprécier à leur juste valeur'. This takes him to the conclusion that 'pour l'étude sérieuse de la poésie, les traductions ne peuvent être considérées que comme un accessoire, et que ce sont surtout les textes et les commentaires arabes qu'il est important de multiplier' (1861 : 113).

Evaluation in what follows shall be exercised by applying three criteria established in Lahiani 2008. These are the mode of discourse criterion, the *skopos* criterion and the function-based criterion. The former urges one to evaluate the prose translations separately from the verse ones, though comparison may be established at some stages between them. This is due to the fact that 'verse translations are usually expected to sound as poetry in addition to their adherence to the semantics and aesthetics of a pre-existing text' (Ibid : 120). The *skopos* criterion deals with 'the link that a translator establishes between his/her TT and the ST,' which establishes the need 'to go through the translators' introductory notes as well as their operational strategies (p. 119). The function-based criterion 'accounts for functionally equivalent aesthetic implements as acceptable,' while at the same time it takes 'the ST as the main yardstick in the evaluation process' (Ibid : 120).

### Comparative Work

The corpus that the present article scrutinizes is made up of thirteen translations. Five of these are done into prose, while the rest are versified. It is noticed that the closer the corpus gets to our modern age, the more of the verse translations we get than of the prose ones. In the corpus of the verse renderings, two omit the verse dealt with here. These are René Khawam's (1960) and Desmond O'Grady's (1990). None of these translators informs his reader about the omission(s) exercised. This may be due to the fact that they just perceived the semantic content of the verse and hence divorced it from its stylistic peculiarities. The message communicated by the verse is expressed in another context in the *Mu'allaqa*. It is, thus, probable that Khawam and O'Grady exercised omission for the purpose of semantic condensation. After going through the riches of the verse as detailed above, the reader may perceive the loss incurred in these two translations.

Starting with the corpus of the prose renderings, William Jones' translation reads as follows:

> Yet without having committed any offence, I am treated like the worst offender – am censured, insulted, upbraided, rejected (1782 : 24).

The first aspect that draws one's attention in this translation lies in Jones' preservation of the ST polyptoton. This incurs a shift that is compensated for, though. The ST three-dimensional polyptoton finds its equivalent in a two-dimensional one: 'offence' and 'offender.' The emphatic function of the polyptoton is preserved in the superlative form that Jones adds. This highlights the contrast that Ṭarafa grounds between his innocence and his tribe's injustice towards him. The dash used to separate both clauses in this translation deepens the reader's awareness of this contrast and of the speaker's bitterness as he voices it out, which stands as one of the ST communicative priorities. As in the ST, too, Jones preserves the enumeration embedded in the second hemistich. In this, he enumerates four aspects, rather than three. It is quite possible here that Jones attempted to follow the ST in including four linguistic elements. Though made up of two words, the phrase '*qadhfī bi al-šakātī*' refers to one deed only. In addition, the deeds that Jones enumerates do not strictly adhere to what the ST mentions. They are rather inspired from it, and at the same time pleonastic. 'censured,' 'upbraided' and 'rejected' convey all the same message, while '*qadhfī bi al-šakātī*' is ignored.

Unlike Jones, Armand Pierre Caussin de Perceval keeps up to the ST elements. Despite this, his translation is by far weaker than Jones' insofar as its appeal is concerned:

> *Je n'ai point commis de crime, et cependant l'on m'outrage, l'on m'accuse, l'on se plaint amèrement de moi, l'on me repousse comme un coupable*.

The basic shift incurred in this translation lies in Caussin de Perceval's modulation of lexical aspects. Whereas the ST uses affective intensive aspects in its second hemistich, this TT uses purely objective aspects. Indeed, the words 'accuse,'

'se plaint,' 'repousse' and 'coupable' by no means communicate the intensive dimension of the lexical elements originally used. As seen in the introductory analysis above, intensity and effect stand at the heart of this verse, and Ṭarafa does not seem to reserve any effort to convey this. Caussin de Perceval's manipulation of the first hemistich is analogous to his manipulation of the second one. The polyptoton is abrogated with no attempt for compensation. The antithetical parallelism that ties both hemistichs to one another is not given due value, either. The only aspect employed for this lies in the translator's use of the conjunction 'cependant.'

Such a difference between Jones' and Caussin de Perceval's translations may be explained by their *skopoï*. Jones was driven to the *Mu'allaqāt* by aesthetics[9]. In this poetry, he notes, 'vehement passion is expressed in strong words, exactly measured, and pronounced, in a *common* voice, in just cadence, and with proper accents' (1993 : 133). As he produces his translations of six *Mu'allaqāt* for the purpose of illustrating the historical data that he deals with in his book, Caussin de Perceval claims just before presenting his translation of Imru' al-Qays's *Mu'allaqa* that his main aim is to give the reader 'une idée, par une traduction aussi fidèle que le permet la différence du génie des langues' 1847: 325-26). It follows that the ST aesthetics is not a priority for him; nor is it for Johnson, whose translation comes next in the corpus. Johnson's translation of the *Mu'allaqāt* is purely didactic:

> Without any occurrence which I caused to happen I am blamed and reproached with complaints and banished, and I am regarded as if I have caused my own defamation, my own reproach with complaint, and my own banishment. (1894 : 56)

Johnson's attempt to mime the composition of the ST syntactic units is clear here. Despite his preservation of this and of the polyptoton, the communicative value of the verse is lost. As he ignores the antithetical parallelism that ties both parts of the verse, and as he labours to[10] transmit the ST semantics, Johnson leaves the speaker's appeal behind. The notes juxtaposed to his rendering are all focused on the syntactic composition of the verse. They use words from the ST in Arabic script and then a technical commentary in English. This, in addition to Johnson's edition of the ST in its original script in parallel with the translation on the same page, means that translation for Johnson is a way to explain the ST rather than to speak for it.

Like Johnson, M.C. Bateson juxtaposes a transliteration of the ST verses to her translations. As she appends her translation to her critical book, she makes it clear that she does not consider it as a priority. Bateson labours, like Johnson long before her, to mime the ST syntactic units in terms of both words number and semantic aspects. The following is her rendering:

> Without any breach I introduced, and as an instigator (of crime) (occur) my imprecation and my defamation with complaints, and my banishment (1970 : 150)

In addition to the fact that it weakens the antithetical parallelism embedded in the original verse, this rendering also and wholeheartedly breaks with the ST aesthetics. As pointed out above, this is due to the fact that translation

for Bateson is an ornamental part of her book and not a vital one. Bateson's awareness of the communicative importance of such a device as assonance, for instance, is beyond doubt. She notes in the 'Phonological Deviation' chapter of her book that 'the unit of vowel frequency deviation, the passage in which it occurs, must have been at the same time a unit of affect, knit by one set of emotions. Thus, any passage characterized by a deviant vowel distribution has very strong arguments for its integrity and unified composition' (Ibid : 67). It follows that it is the lack of aesthetic and philological *skopoï* that result in such a low quality rendering.

Insofar as the translators of Ṭarafa's *Mu'allaqa* are concerned, it is worth mentioning that the one who opens the corpus, William Jones, and the one who closes it, Schmidt, are the only ones that aim at aesthetics[11]. The following is Jean-Jacques Schmidt's translation:

> *Quel mal ai-je donc fait pour mériter tant d'injures, pour que l'on se plaigne ainsi de moi au point de me chasser* (1978 : 91)?

The first characteristic that attracts one's attention here is Schmidt's formulation of his rendering into a rhetorical question. This compensates for the loss of the ST polyptoton and hence it helps transmit the speaker's appeal as embedded in the ST. It is regrettable, though, that the appeal created is not as strong as in the ST, because of the shifts exercised at the level of the choice of lexical aspects. Clearly, the items 'mal,' 'injures' and 'se plaigner' do not transmit the intensive affective aspect used in the lexis of the ST. As seen in the introductory section above, the intensive aspect in the ST is further intensified by means of the double-dimensioned alliteration. It is regrettable, in fact, that Schmidt does not take advantage of the rhetorical question to build up to the original intensified appeal.

Having gone through the corpus of the prose translations, one needs to get backwards in chronology to read the first verse translation of this ST:

> *They rail at and revile me, who know me no ill-doer;*
> *me, who have borne their burdens, cast would they out from them* (Wingfried S. : 131-2)

To begin with, the Blunts preserve at least two stylistic aspects of the ST: antithetical parallelism and the alliterative bias of the ST first hemistich. These are modulated, though, in order for them to acquire new dimensions in the Blunts' couplet. The reader is notified in the Blunts' introduction of their translation of Ṭarafa's *Mu'allaqa* that it 'has been a difficult task to give it a readable English form' (1903 : 9). Starting with antithetical parallelism, this is shifted in such a way as to color both lines of the Blunts' couplet. Instead of the stock enumeration stated in the ST second hemistich, the Blunts include two punishments at the beginning of the first line ('rail' and 'revile') and then they state the third one at the end of the couplet. Scattering the references to punishments along the two lines of the couplet enables the Blunts to foreground the contrast between the poet's innocence and the injustice exercised against him. Such a focus on antithetical parallelism is positive insofar as the first TT line is concerned. The alliterative /r/ sound in 'rail' and 'revile' mimes the

tribe's *roaring* against the poet. As a counterpart, the homophones 'know' and 'no' highlight the exclusion that the poet protests against.

The sole shortcoming in this translation lies in the embedded phrase that the Blunts insert in the second line: 'who have borne their burdens.' Though relevant to the appeal of the part of the *Mu'allaqa* to which this verse belongs, this information is not mentioned here. Contrary to the Blunts, A. J. Arberry breaks with aesthetics when he handles this verse, despite the fact that he manages to transmit its meaning:

> There's nothing amiss I've occasioned; yet it's just as if I was cause
> *of my own defamation, and being complained of, and made an outcaste* (1957 : 87)

As he loses the ST polyptoton and alliterations, and as he does not exercise any mode of compensation, Arberry produces a TT that is void of both tone and tempo. The ST poet's feelings of bitterness and injustice that are originally communicated by means of the above mentioned schemes of repetition are not communicated by any means in this TT. The fact that Arberry uses in his translation a colloquial register does not enhance him to keep up to such functionally aesthetic tools. Despite the fact that 'such a modern register facilitates the reception of the TT in its milieu, it deprives the ST of one of its communicational priorities, i.e. its temporal deixis' (Lahiani, R., 2008 : 131-2). The lines quoted above show, in addition, that the register that Arberry adopts destroys the original tempo and hence it breaks with the ST communicative dimension.

Apart from the problem of register, Arberry's translation is defective in its choice of lexical elements and aspects. For instance, the adjective 'amiss' is not focused enough to convey the ST verb 'ḥadath' with the intensification that it acquires by means of the three-dimensional polyptoton. Also, the fact that Arberry translates the ST enumerative hemistich into phrases slows down the tempo of his line and hence it softens the tone that is originally tough.

Michael Sells[12] is one of the few translators of the *Mu'allaqāt* who renders these Arabic verses into quatrains. This enables him to shorten the lines and hence hasten their tempo. Another feature that Sells uses is shaped verse. This lies in his indentation of the lines with variations between expansion and retreat. This indentation is visual only and thus, it does not do with metrical feet variation. Sells could have taken advantage of the shaped quatrain form to convey the contrast between the poet's innocence and the injustice exercised against him visually, and hence compensate for the loss of the repetition-based schemes in his translation:

> *I brought on no misfortune,*
> *as if I were the cause*
> *of my being abused,*
> *disparaged, put aside!* [13]

The enjambed lines that make up the quatrain above flow in one direction only and hence, they do not reflect any of the ST stylistic resources or even compensate for them to fulfill their function. Sells' work with this verse breaks to a large extent with his *skopoï*. As he introduces his translation, Sells notes that his 'goal is a translation that is natural, idiomatic, and poetic'[14]. He explains his

choice of the *Mu'allaqa* of Ṭarafa by the fact that it 'is commensurate with our poetic concerns and poetic values' (ibid.). Unfortunately, the quatrain above does not attempt to transport any of the ST poetics into the TL.

The sole positive characteristic that one perceives in Sells' translation insofar as the ST function is concerned lies in the translator's use of a series of three past participles. Such a choice dates back to William Jones' translation, and it is functional in transmitting the speaker's claimed subjection. Contrarily, Christopher Nouryeh uses the active voice and hence he shifts the bias of the verse from the speaker's subjection to the might of the person talked about, which breaks with the ST communicative priority:

> *Yet still he flouted me for nothing, even*
> *blames me as if I had been an outcast (1993 : 88)*

The first ST hemistich, with its stylistic and communicative riches, is reduced into the phrase 'for nothing.' Not only does it shrink in terms of word number, this is also too detached, lexically speaking, to communicate the ST poet's feeling of bitterness. In addition, the verb 'to fout' is not the direct equivalent of '*hijā*',' for the latter means 'to defame.' As in Johnson's translation, the verb 'to blame' is not as intensive as the phrase '*qadhfī bi al-šakātī*.'

Much more serious than these lacunae is the misappropriation committed in the phrase 'as if I had been an outcast.' It is true that the ST includes a simile, but this compares the poet to someone that has been punished, or to a wrong-doer. By means of the phrase 'as if,' Nouryeh's Ṭarafa excludes his being an outcast. The ST claims the exact opposite, though, as the original Ṭarafa says that tribal banishment is one of the three punishments that befell him. In the vein of these shifts, one may see that almost all is lost in this translation: message, appeal and stylistic aspects. Despite Nouryeh's belief that a translation has 'to be faithful, not literal' (1993 : 3), the translation quoted above is neither 'faithful' nor 'literal'. It is disappointing that Nouryeh comes up with such a rendering when Caussin de Perceval's, Arberry's and Sells' translations are listed in his bibliography.

In contrast with Nouryeh, Jacque Berque manages to take advantage of a weakness in an earlier translation of his, to construct a more acceptable rendering:

> *Et sans rien avoir commis, comme si j'eusse commis j'essuierais, moi,*
> *diatribe, calomnie, éviction? (1979 : 156)*

> *sans avoir commis de saleté, bien que je sois comme un sale*
> *calomnié, satirisé, dénoncé, chassé... (1995 : 36)*

Starting with the earlier rendering, it is worth pointing at the maneuvers exercised by Berque to produce a musical translation and hence keep up to one of the ST riches. The ploce produced by the intermittent repetition of the past participle 'commis' compensates for the ST polyptoton. This modulation enables

Berque to maintain not only a repetition-based scheme, but the function of the original one. The alliteration and assonance that the ploce results in match the /k/ and /o/ sounds in 'comme,' a conjunction that is juxtaposed to the first occurrence of 'commis.' Alliteration is also fulfilled by the repetition of the /s/ sound in 'sans,' 'eusse' and 'essuierais.' As in the ST, too, Berque keeps assonance by the repetition of the /i/ sound throughout his translation. As expanded upon in the introduction of this article, this is functional.

The translation that Berque produced in 1979 is acceptable as it manages to preserve many ST communicative clues. In addition to style, it also adheres to meaning. The three nouns that close it convey the punishments that Ṭarafa had to assume. Berque's touch here lies in his formulation of the enumeration of these in the form of a rhetorical question. By means of this device, the TT speaker denounces like the ST one the way according to which he is treated. Schmidt already used a rhetorical question in his translation. Berque's work is much more successful, though, because of the work done with style and repetition-based schemes. Berque's later translation is worked without a rhetorical question. In this, the enumeration is shifted from nouns, as in the ST and in the translation of 1979, to past participles. This choice dates back to William Jones' and then Michael Sells' translations. It is functional insofar as it conveys the communicative function of the ST second hemistich. It is equally positive that Berque closes his revised translation with three dots. These convey the speaker's feeling of oppression, especially that they are used after the enumeration of four participles. They suggest the idea that the list of punishments is endlessly open.

Another change that Berque introduces in the translation of 1995 lies in his preservation of the ST polyptoton; this is done at a dual level, rather than at a triple one. His reference to dirt by means of different morphological patterns ('saleté' and 'sale') is productive not only in its creation of alliteration (/s/ and /l/) and assonance (/a/), which is in itself positive, but also in its modification of the deed ('commis') and of the speaker ('comme'). The improvement here lies in Berque's awareness of the fact that the level of expression in the clause 'sans rien avoir commis' (1979) is too abstract to guide the reader towards the ST intention. His use of the phrase 'de saleté' in the translation of 1995 makes the expression as concrete as in the ST. In addition, the phrase 'comme si j'eusse commis' is not grammatical, as the French verb 'commettre' is transitive. It follows that Berque's omission of the second occurrence of 'commis' in his revised work, and hence his cancellation of ploce, is productive. This enables him to use a more grammatical and functional clause: 'comme un sale.' By means of these shifts, Berque produces a translation that adheres to the ST concrete level of expression.

Insofar as he handles the ST antithetical parallelism, Berque uses conjunctive locutions: 'comme si' (1979) and 'bien que' (1995). The contrast is clear in the first translation by means of the focus exercised on the first-person persona. The embedded pronoun 'moi' confirms this. In addition, Berque's use of the *imparfait du subjonctif* tense in 'eusse' highlights the contrast between two situations: the speaker's presumed innocence and his condemnation. It is

regrettable that this is abrogated in Berque's revised translation. In this, it is not clear which subject is modified by the participles used in the second line: 'je' or 'un sale.' The fact that the lines are enjambed does not help Berque reflect the boundary between the syntactic elements in his translation of 1995. Such ambiguity decreases the affective dimension of the verse.

Pierre Larcher closes the corpus with the following couplet:

> 76- « Sans avoir commis de crime, comme un criminel,
>      On me calomnie, se plaint de moi, me bannit ! » (2000 : 68)

The first characteristic that draws one's attention here lies in Larcher's use of caesuras. This is an important characteristic of the alexandrine, the meter that Larcher adopts in his translation of the *Mu'allaqāt*. As it uses the alexandrine 'déniaisé,' Larcher's translation uses caesuras that are close to the classical alexandrine but are not identical to it[15]. The function of the caesura used in the first line is to reflect the ST antithetical parallelism. The fact that the line is self-contained urges the reader to give it due value and hence be aware of its communicative dimension. The latter is reinforced by means of Larcher's minuteness in handling levels of expression and sound patterns. Like Berque (1995) before him[16], Larcher uses a concrete level of expression. His improvement here lies in his restriction of this concreteness: 'crime' is more concrete than 'saleté' and it collocates with the punishments listed in the second line. As he refers to crime, Larcher hits more than one bird with the same stone: firstly, he preserves the ST polyptoton, though like Berque at a dual level, rather than at a triple one as in the ST. Secondly, the words 'crime' and 'criminel,' which make up the polyptoton in Larcher's translation, alliterate with 'commis,' 'comme' and 'calomnie.' Here, the alliterative sound /k/ is a voiceless velar plosive. Leech places plosives at the top in a scale of descending hardness (1987 : 98). This hardness is toughened further by means of the absence of voice in this sound.

The second line of Larcher's translation embodies two caesuras, which is productive in at least three dimensions. The first is that this tool mirrors the speaker's low psyche. As he comes to listing the punishments that he has to assume, Larcher's Ṭarafa finds it rather difficult to express himself in clauses that are as long as those used in the first line of the couplet. The fact that the pauses subdivide the line into 5, 4 and then 3 feet also produces a descending rhythm, which matches the speaker's low psyche. The caesuras spread the feeling that the speaker improvised what he said and hence needed pauses to think about what to say next. A second positive characteristic of the caesuras is that they urge the reader to give every part of the line due consideration. Additionally, this feature of the alexandrine enables Larcher to focus on the first-person persona as the object of the punishments listed. As he uses the pronouns 'me' (twice) and 'moi,' Larcher avoids the ambiguity traced in Berque's translation, and at the same time he sheds light on the speaker as the object of the oppression. This also results in alliteration, by the repetition of the /m/ sound. Being a voiced nasal, this sound may be handled as the exact counterpart of the /k/ sound that alliterates in the first line. Nasals stand in Leech's scale at the bottom in terms of hardness (Idem). The presence of voice here furthers the softness of the sound. It is productive, thus, that Larcher reflects

contrast between both lines of the couplet. This echoes the contrast between the speaker's presumed innocence and the punishments exercised against him.

## Conclusion

Larcher's translation is the closest ever to the ST: it manages to transmit the polyptoton, alliterations and assonance. It also manages to convey the antithetical parallelism and the appeal that lies behind it. At the same time, this translation is deeply rooted in its own literary tradition. As he uses the alexandrine 'déniaisé' (2000: p.23) to shape his couplet, Larcher manages to fulfill his objective by '*oraliser* notre traduction, écho dans le texte de la déclamation du poète bédouin, au style très oratoire' (2000: p.24). His translation, thus, 'speaks'; at the same time it 'sings.' The main reason behind Larcher's management with this verse and with the *Mu'allaqāt* in general (Lahiani, 2008: pp. 317-20), lies in the fact that Larcher is a philologist and a linguist in addition to his being a translator. Larcher was, indeed, aware of the ST communicative clues before that he started translating it. He notes in the introduction of his translation of the *Mu'allaqāt* that it is 'la trace de l'oralité que nous recherchons, à défaut de la rime externe, que son unicité dans l'original rend intransposable en français [...] par une large pratique, aux côtés de l'allitération et de l'assonance, de la rime interne' ( Larcher, op. cit : 21)[17]. The comparative work done above proves the need for 'une traduction nouvelle' rather than for 'une nouvelle traduction' (Larcher, P. idem p.13)[18]. This slot is filled in by Larcher's work.

In addition, the analysis above shows that as far as a translation conforms to the ST communicative function and clues, it is accepted to be speaking for the ST. An objective evaluation cannot be reached without applying the mode of discourse and the *skopos* criteria. Concerning the former, a prose writer/translator does not have to abide to the same restrictive rules as a verse one. As for verse, it provides its user with more possibilities to manipulate language. See for instance Sells' use of a shaped quatrain, and Larcher's manipulation of caesuras. The *skopos* criterion is equally important. A translation which is aimed to be a complementary tool cannot be evaluated in the same way as a translation that bears philological and/or aesthetic aims.

## Appendix

| Translators | bilā ḥadathin aḥdathtuhu wa kamuḥdathin<br>hijā'ī wa qadhfī bi al-shakāti wa muṭradī (Ṭarafa, 75) |
|---|---|
| Jones | Yet without having committed any offence, I am treated like the worst offender – am censured, insulted, upbraided, rejected. |
| Caussin de Perceval | Je n'ai point commis de crime, et cependant l'on m'outrage, l'on m'accuse, l'on se plaint amèrement de moi, l'on me repousse comme un coupable. |
| Johnson | Without any occurrence which I caused to happen *I am blamed and I reproached with complaints and banished, and I am regarded* as if I have caused my own defamation, my own reproach with complaint, and my own banishment. |
| Blunts | They rail at and revile me, who know me no ill-doer;<br>me, who have borne their burdens, cast would they out from them. |
| Arberry | There's nothing amiss I've occasioned; yet it's just as if I was cause<br>of my own defamation, and being complained of, and made an outcaste. |
| Khawam | [Omitted] |
| Bateson | Without any breach I introduced, and as an instigator (of crime) (occur) my imprecation and my defamation with complaints, and my banishment; |
| Schmidt | Quel mal ai-je donc fait pour mériter tant d'injures, pour que l'on se plaigne ainsi de moi au point de me chasser ? |
| Berque 1979 | Et sans rien avoir commis, comme si j'eusse commis j'essuierais, moi, diatribe, calomnie, éviction ?/ |
| Berque 1995 | sans avoir commis de saleté, bien que je sois comme un sale<br>calomnié, satirisé, dénoncé, chassé .../ |
| Sells | I brought on no misfortune,<br>as if I were the cause<br>of my being abused,<br>disparaged, put aside! |
| O'Grady | [Omitted] |
| Nouryeh | Yet still he flouted me for nothing, even<br>blames me as if I had been an outcast. |
| Larcher | Sans avoir commis de crime, comme un criminel,<br>On me calomnie, se plaint de moi, me bannit ! |

## Notes

[1] This title is inspired from Jackson Mathews' claim that 'the final test of a translated poem must be does it speak, does it sing?' (1959: p. 68).

[2] « *quiconque ne lira les compositions des poètes les plus célèbres de l'Arabie que dans les traductions latines ou françaises, sera bien loin de pouvoir les apprécier à leur juste valeur* »

[3] Vient de paraître en 2008.

[4] The *Mu'allaqat* is an anthology of seven canonical pre-Islamic poems. Lahiani 2008, chapter one, expands upon the historical and philological aspects of this work.

[5] This is al-Zawzanī's edition of the verse. Though they adopt this same version, al-Anbārī and al-Tibrīzī note that '*kamuḥdathin*' may also be read as '*kamuḥdithin.*' Whereas the poet compares himself by the former to someone that has been punished as stated in the second hemistich, he compares himself in the latter to a wrong-doer. As the analysis below shows, both readings are relevant to the communicative dimension of the verse.

[6] Verse 75.

[7] The only difference between them is the place of articulation; whereas /ḥ/ is pharyngeal, /θ/ is dental.

[8] 1984. p. 98.

[9] This is not exclusive. Lahiani 2008, pp. 42-3, expands upon Jones' *skopoï* in his translation of the *Mu'allaqāt*.

[10] 1978. p.91.

[11] Schmidt does not express his *skopoï* for translating the *Mu'allaqāt* overtly. An evaluation of his translation proves, though, that he most often targets aesthetics (Lahiani, 2008: pp. 136 ff.).

[12] Chronologically, Berque's translations should be evaluated before Sells' and Nouryeh's translations. Due to similarities between the French translations, it has been preferred to deal with them simultaneously.

[13] 1986.p.30.

[14] 1986.p.21.

[15] Baldick, 1996, explains that the ancient alexandrine uses a single caesura at the middle of a line to divide it into two groups of six syllables, whereas the nineteenth-century alexandrine uses two caesuras to get a line into three parts of four syllables each.

[16] Despite the fact that he draws his reader's attention to his specific awareness of Sells' translation (2000: p. 60), Larcher, as shall be detailed below is rather influenced with Berque's work.

[17] Larcher. Idem. P. 24.

[18] Idem. P. 13.

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