Title: THE TWA LITERATURES – A TALE: THE ROLE OF OCCASIONAL ACTORS IN THE CO-TRANSLATION, CELEBRATION AND DISSEMINATION OF EMIRATI AL NABATI TO WORLD POETRY

Author: Elizabeth Rainey

Affiliation: Higher Colleges of Technology, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

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Abstract: It is undeniable that literature acts as a form of socio-linguistic continuity, and while Medieval English literature references Arabic sources in translation and comparative literature has examined their themes and structures, some argue that such comparisons are unsustainable parallels. In The Twa Literatures- a Tale: the role of occasional actors in the co-translation, celebration and dissemination of Emirati al Nabati to World Poetry is examined. The paper advocates the key importance of such cultural bridging, using extracts from the researcher’s small corpus of al Nabati poetry, to highlight interesting forms of dialogue within and about these literatures. This exercise may stimulate debate on the importance of occasional translators, help open up Emirati poetry to non-Arabists and celebrate regionalism within World Poetry. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Burns, Keats and Seamus Heaney help frame the honest appeal of this genre and augment its access to the West. Thus Bedouin voices showcase their poetry by networks which illustrate ‘extant and desired relationships’ evidenced in … choices of genre, mediating technologies, and language, as well as in their acts of citation and collaboration, assertions of ownership, and decisions about who is granted access to … performances, pieces, and traditions’ (Dueck, 2017, p. 392).

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Author Bio: Elizabeth Rainey has a BA Hons and MA from Trinity College, Dublin and MA in Linguistics/TESOL.

Author email: erainey@hct.ac.ae
Characterized as “debate poetry” dating to the Sumerian civilization 4000 years ago by Holes, domestic and tribal issues often dominate in the al Nabati forum (Ahmed, 2014). Yet broader thematic issues such as love, hunting and loss are engaged with equal enthusiasm. While Van Tieghem stated of the folklore tradition that such “anonymous traditions” were not art, many others consider this position overly dismissive of most forms of oral popular culture, and certainly it is inappropriate for such an aged genre as al Nabati (1993, p. 89). However, the same objections to the literary merits of Bedouin compositions in relation to fussha are also present within the Arab world, and Cornish and other minority communities have faced many similar difficulties in Britain. This negative attitude has as much to do with positioning, accessibility and political will, as it has with content or literary merit.

Prior to acceptance by mainstream America, Langston Hughes described his own situation in “Theme for English B,” where the voice of an African America was articulated. Therefore, Bedouin inclusion in World Englishes alongside World Arabics allows the representation of a distinctive social and cultural grouping ready to define itself further internationally. The dismissal of language variants as regional, and thus substandard or non-standardized, is an over-simplification. Variety has always existed in languages, and while precision is required to augment meaning, it does not mean that all deviation is somehow dangerous. This behavior has sometimes been dismissed in the past as “not creative adaptations but degenerations; not systems in their own right but deviations from other systems”, according to Hymes, cited in (1972, p. 273). Grammatical errors may be entropic, yet the creation of new metaphors and application of innovative language is a creative act. Indeed, Malhun (ungrammatical or non-Classical) Arabic was widely used in poetry, as Bedouins related it with political and economic self-determination (Holes & Abu Athera, 2009). However, these differentiated dialects are not a mere sub-standard form of Arabic, but living regional off-shoots that have often been treated with a lack of respect, akin to the first reaction to Wordsworth’s disenfranchised subjects in his “Preface to the Lyrical Ballads.”

Further, Sowayan stresses the cross-over between oral and written sources, and this is the reason for the inclusion of these corpus examples (1985). One is composed by a literate Bedouin named Mohammed, but transmitted later by his illiterate sister, Shamsa al Falahi in Al Ain, the Untitled Dialogue, which features many interesting word choices and idiosyncrasies. Such contributions are from people who have no inclination to showcase their work through the medium of television, but rather choose the medium of private performance. Access to such cooperation from the community was key and such networking was possible only due to extended social capital. The examples are mediated, not as public events, or via competitions “available to the masses,” but rather as intimate cameos (Clark, 2008). The delivery required careful negotiation as an insider and later permission to co-translate to an English speaking audience was not automatic. This corpus, therefore, augments materials already recorded by the UAE government’s Archiving Department and other private ethnographic collections, as part of a more extensive historiographical investigation, archiving indigenous art forms and co-translation projects. It is, therefore, intended as complementary in scope and an assist to more extended studies of Arabists.

Besides issues of access, according to Professor R. Ghobash (personal communication, March 29, 2015), there is not so much a shortage of poetry in country but rather of reliable co-translators with
full community approval. As this study has been conducted at grass roots level, the translation strategy used a Bedouin-centred method, negotiating meaning through code-switching and mixing semi-literate and illiterate strategies (Sowayan, 1985). Consequently, the experience of fieldwork actively encouraged the dynamics of transmission, recording and transcription, helping to preserve the intangible heritage of the Emirates. I allowed the teller to tell the tale. Support from Agar (2008) towards language learning in the field highlights the importance of such social currency, where he advocates active pragmatics to assist the researcher.

Additionally, Kristmannsson (2015) comments that historically, translation was not carried out by degree holders but was a more pragmatic and organic exercise. Citing Dante’s *De Vulgaris Eloquentia*, where the vernacular is celebrated alongside limited access to performances, smaller scale projects were viewed as an overall enriching experience and means of transmission. Such methods are offered as a contrast with popular media spectaculars. Therefore, such socially based co-translation is facilitating *al Nabati* to be less in the specialist domain of a minority and more in the popular realm, to remind the world of its pragmatic and populist origins. Such democratization helps to augment a continued dialogue in translation studies. The reciprocal nature of co-translation and its later validation conforms to what educators like Piaget or Vygotsky would deem learning by social interaction and “with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Validation from Emirati specialists such as Dr. Fatima al Shamsi of the Sorbonne, Abu Dhabi, for the translation of the Khalfan Musabah’s poem, *Daa’ al Hub*, was essential in this process.

Finally, there have not been many extensive efforts to analyze and contextualize individual Emirati compositions until lately (Hurreiz, 2002). This is especially true in relation to other poems in English according to Sowayan (1982; 2013). While for some comparative studies may be difficult to position, currently in times of heightened conflict in the Middle East, such bridging exercises are very helpful in contributing to a dialogue. The impact of conflicts have been felt across Europe and beyond, so efforts to mediate more goodwill are not without a real need and their advocates (Rainey, 2016). The importance of art in such an enterprise has been for a long time been advocated, by the British Council and others, in efforts to improve prejudicial stereotyping, according to Sheffield (Geranpayeh, 2016). To this end projects such as Warehouse 421 in Abu Dhabi, under the patronage of Sheihka Salama al Nahyan, are receiving much recognition in cultural diplomacy (Geranpayeh, 2016). Finally the European Union has also advocated heightening cultural ties with the UAE in its Mission under Mogherini (Salama, 2016). Such efforts at inter-cultural contact are all the more necessary in an age of renewed political entrenchment.

**II**

This paper further aims to identify regional variants of Emirati Arabic, in tandem with marginal uses of lexis and dialects in English. This is largely to open up Emirati poetry to legitimize the lexis that has been forgotten through lack of usage and to make it again accessible. By relating Bedouin regional dialect to other English non-mainstream examples, I would like to underscore archaic vocabulary in both the original Arabic composition, combined with colloquial language choices and classical themes in the target language, English.
Although it may seem presumptuous to compare these Emirati compositions to more familiar texts, it is equally judgmental to conclude that they may not. The intellectual traffic that has emanated from the Middle East as a result of commercial interests has impacted English literature to a very great extent, through translation. Additionally, the extent of Hellenization in the Emirates is disputed, and though Greek coins have been found at Mileiha, how this has impacted the Bedouins beyond the use of material culture in the currency or dirham (Persian for coin, and derived from the Greek drachmæ) is disputed widely (Dodge, 1970). Certainly there was trade in language, and Sowayan (2013) is also keen to make other strategic comparisons with Greek sources.

Further, modernization in the UAE today has meant that much education is delivered in an English medium, yet translations of Emirati poems might yet make their way into school textbooks here. Current educational curricula are being reformed to become more relevant to twenty-first century stake-holders, and renewed interest in Arabic heritage makes co-translations of local poems very emergent. Studying these next to contributions in both English and Arabic would show Emirati poetry as relevant globally, not simply of note within the Arab and Islamic world. As Goethe, cited in Berman, believed, “flagging national literatures are revived by the foreign,” and such a dynamic stimulus is all the more thought-provoking today through new methods of co-translation (1992, p. 65).

The Englishing of the Untitled Hunting Dialogue of Mohammed al Falahi allows a juxtaposition of a local composition alongside works from diachronous time periods and regions. What do such comparisons tell us? Firstly, examples such as the comparative framework used by Paxton (2006) which used inter-textual analysis within a cultural, social and political context, shows how ethnographic work can be applied. Her discourse analysis in South Africa, on integrating language and content within a regional catchment, was a notable application of the question and answer format in traditional Zulu poetry. The transference to economics, recreating linguistic forms in an academic style, was remarkable, and shows how apparently disparate elements may engage the imagination and win attention (Paxton, 2006). The use of a poetry in cultural bridging through al Nabati debate poetry is exciting, since the combination of an oral tradition with recognized themes, structure and marginalized vocabulary can instruct the English–speaking world in the rich culture of the United Arab Emirates, alongside celebrating its own literature and heritage.

Secondly, Guillén (1993) has summarized three broad over-arching systems of comparative literature that have been generally accepted: international frameworks, such as the picaresque, categorized as type A; works with socio-historical features in common such as oral epics type B; and type C, those united through some form of literary analysis. This supranational rubric looks at the type C method. Thirdly and more specifically, Zhirmunsky has also commented on similarity of character types between Tristan and Iseult and the Persian Vis-o-Ramin poem by Asad Gorgani, possibly derived from Greek comedy (Bassnett, 1993). Finally, Levine’s statement endorses Sowayan’s specialist claim about the inter-connectivity of practices: “The sophisticated processes of a self-conscious literature do not differ as much as we used to think from the subliminal processes of folklore” (1968, p. 110). This would seem to endorse the ability to compare literate with non-literate, global regions and time periods, with a view to isolating particular regional use of morpho-syntactical phrases.
At the micro-level, regional choices of vocabulary and pronunciation do offer distinct choices that enhance local identities, while at the same time engage with larger more universal concerns. It is how these differences define the region that is of interest, and to relate them to a Scots or Ulster use of English could make potentially useful socio-political as well as linguistic arguments, on regionalism within the United Kingdom, in times of increasing change. By focusing on archaic and regional aspects of the poems, it is possible to show that the indigenous compositions of the Emirates have a distinct flavor which other regional literature and older forms of English also enjoy. Marginalization of relatively disempowered languages, dialects and places is unhelpful as the elderly Bedouin woman transmitting from Al Ain oasis shows. She articulates her culture both regionally and internationally and shows its richness in a dynamic way. Over the course of the three- to seven-day camel ride that it would have taken from Abu Dhabi to Al Ain, differences in dialects are detectable; such differences amount to a linguistic fingerprint that is sometimes difficult to identify but needs to be documented. Celebrating the inclusion of Emirati society and its importance as a cultural hub is part of the Happiness initiative of the present government. According to the current Minister of Happiness Dr. al Roumi, “The role of the government is to create an environment where people can flourish – can reach their potential – and choose to be happy. For us in the UAE, happiness is very important” (al Khaishgi, 2016).

However, since the term comparative literature itself has been the subject of question, not least by Croce who re-designated it as literary history, any deployment of sources, translations, dialects and traditions will meet with inevitable questions (Bassnett, 1993). Yet the history of the world has been defined by difficult linguistic and political comparisons. How the fragmented testimonies of the older generation are recognized or valued depends on their acceptance by a mainstream audience, and their rejection is based primarily on a lack of access. The focus on material unavailable in the public sphere breaks down ideological barriers within societies and cultures such as those placed upon comparative literatures. The oral narratives of the Emirates cannot be ignored, for while on the one hand, the production of traditional poetry is being maintained by the current generation, the dialects they have used in the past have been fractured. Combining a record of these voices in relation to linguistic shifts in English augments interest in Bedouin oral poetry in both the Arab and English-speaking world and is an area of renewed interest in co-translation and study.

III

Shamsa al Falahi and Khalfan Bin Musabah are featured here to distinguish between oral and written compositions. There is a frequent blurring of the two forms in Nabati poetry as the transmitter becomes a practitioner (Sowayan, 1985). Shamsa transmitted the poem of her literate deceased brother from a larger repertoire of live al Nabati practice, in an Untitled Dialogue. Mohammed al Falahi and Hissa, his Saluki, known as Little Cotton Ball, compliment each others’ prowess and character. Mohammed passed away around thirty-five years ago, and he wrote it when in his fifties. More exact data is not available for that generation, as they had no birth certificates. The transcription below is by Noura al Muhairi, Shamsa’s grand-daughter, an Emirati artist and events co-ordinator; the transliteration is the author’s. The co-translation was approved by Shamsa.

انـجان هـزري فـيـح مـاخـب قـطـلن يـا جـلب المـسره  
قنينصي في روحي اسليه وصوته جداي ما يفره
Inchan hezri fich makhab gattun
ya chelb massrah
Gnassee fi ruhi aseleeh
wa sautah jedai ma yefirrah
Chan el khizaz illi yerkaz dhanih
el doun elhadhiba ban ghirrah
Tais el jebeel lazem adhawwih
wa dhouja min elmoti harrah
Rifiat ‘ aliayya adaarih
margus alla el aoud marrah
Kass el khamr ma darar fi yedih
wa la jed wuta fi illi yedirrah
‘ainich mithel el herab
womin el asayil fitch ferrah

She will never let me down, my sweet white ball of cotton.
My marksman, my soul’s own delight, alert to my call.
Spotted from the camp on the horizon with the fresh mark,
Bringing the quivering game from the far mountain before it is dusk.
I will protect you, you who have never danced to the oud,
Or even once held a cup of wine, or followed a crooked path.
Eagle- sharp- eyed, pure-bred, of the best pedigree.
(Trans. Elizabeth Rainey and Noura al Muhairi, 2012)

This delightful dialogue shows the regard of the hunter for his faithful companion as in Islam, city dwellers consider dogs as unclean, washing their hands several times in the sand if they come into contact with them. The Bedouin whose life was sustained by hunting, by contrast, allowed working dogs to sleep in the tent as a family guard. He refers to her endearingly as Gattun or Cotton, in reference to her luscious, white, fluffy coat, which resembles cotton candy. This attribute is praised alongside her other qualities. Yet Mohammed is narrator in the first and last lines only. The dog’s voice is more important, and she tells of her steadfast devotion to her master, and to his nobility (assail), his pure Arab blood line, reflected in his noble demeanour (Nicholson, 1993). Her owner returns the compliment and praises her pedigree and dedication to hunting. Immortalized in his poem, Mohammed encapsulates the etiquette of the desert. Described with an additional pattern, a double mono-rhyme (maomumah), Hissa reciprocates. This additional internal rhyme (na’isa), ending in eee, a form indicative of an older form of poetry according to Holes and Abu Athera (2011), added prestige to her account.

While the phrases “you who have never danced to the oud,” “Or even once held a cup of wine,” “or followed a crooked path” could be formulaic according to Shamsa’s family, Mohammed is dead and unable to confirm this. His word play is very idiosyncratic, but the increased use of figures of speech, according to Catalán’s research on Spanish romances, cited in Guillén (1993), is more indicative of rehearsed elements. Mohammed’s use of the more formalized structure suggests a familiarity with written compositions. Furthermore, as with Persian tales, and also Aesop, animals were often given a speaking role, and indeed both Shamsa and her brother make
use of an animal voice in their poetry. It is also possible to say that it was not uncommon to find this kind of dialogue in the UAE.¹

While comparison of theme and form is not new, the morpho-syntactical choices of the Bedouin voice that mediates the region to the global community is heightened when placed alongside the following Scots and Middle English examples. The significance of such local impact crossing national boundaries is such an engaging manner, is a twenty-first century example of the linguistic exchanges which took place along the old Silk Road. Here animals are allowed to act as the subject of “mitayil (exempla, guiding principles, parables, allegories)” to show continuity of practice and efficacy (Sowayan, 1985, p. 124).

IV

In British literature, “The Twa Dogs – A Tale” of Burns (1786) is renowned. The poet uses his dogs Caesar and Luath as examples both in terms of physical attributes and of noble character. Indeed the dogs remain happy in the end not to be like humans. Caeser, for example, was painted in the following way:

His breast was white, his touzie back
Weel clad wi’ coat o’ glossy black;
His gawsie tail, wi’ upward curl,

This description uses the Scots “gawsie” or “ample” to show how the animal sports his tail proudly aloft, kindling a striking visual portrait of the dog. Further his nature or character is sound, as he is described by Burns in the following terms:

His locked, letter’d, braw brass collar
Shew’d him the gentleman an’ scholar;
But though he was o’ high degree,
The fient a pride, nae pride had he.
(Mackay, 1993)

Caesar is devoid of the sin of pride, and “fient” is used to describe this lack of devilish behavior. Luath, Burns’s own dog, too is favoured with similar complimentary phrases. This use of exempla is similar to Mohammed’s description of refined behavior in both his hunting dog and his owner’s, the Bedouin Arab. The elegiac to a faithful companion, with the shining example of impeccable behavior, is delivered like Burns’s in his regional tongue.

An earlier example from 1496 of the laudable qualities of the lurcher breed is to be found in what has been attributed to Dame Juliana Berners’ or Barnes’ verse treatise, found in the Boke of Seynt Albans. It is described as “This Present Boke Shewyth the Manere of Hawkynge [And] Huntynge and Also of Diuysynge of Cote Armours. It Shewyth Also a Good Matere Belongynge to Horse Wyth Other Co[m]mendable Treatyses” (1496) (Berners, 2009). This is believed to be a translation of Twici’s Le Art de Venerie (Jacob, 1968). It has been converted into a vibrant modern poem, “The Properties of a Good Greyhound” by Seamus Heaney. He created four stanzas, and opens:

¹The Middle Persian animals stories Kalilag-o Demnak, which became Kalilawa Dimma in Arabic during the Abbasid Caliphate, have probably crossed over; the current version based on the collection of Antoine Gallan, three centuries afterwards.
A greyhound should be headed like a Snake,
And necked like a Drake,
Footed like a Cat,
Tailed like a Rat,
Sidèd like a Team,
Chined like a Beam.
(Washburn and Majors, 1997)

Heaney’s translation gave the work the immediacy and mnemonic quality of a child’s nursery rhyme and makes it accessible to the non-specialist. In his poem, the dog’s physical attributes are itemized and again the tail is mentioned. Less the jolly “gawsie” of Burns, he employs a simile to describe its length and whip-like aspect, “tailed like a rat.” “Chined like a beam” illustrates the turn of speed from the animal, reminiscent of the swiftness of the saluki in the Dialogue. However, his list of similes is also a very visual collection of images, in an aa bb rhyming couplet format, to couple the dog’s characteristics with familiar objects such as a team or animals. This gives a nursery rhyme aspect to the poem, especially as the verbs and nouns are capitalized, reminiscent of a child’s building bricks. He also evokes the spirit of the earlier work, by using the word “sidèd.” Aesop also wrote a short fable entitled “The Two Dogs,” and the use of animal voices was often to disguise regional or dissident voices.

Consequently, the use of animals in poetry, as in the Medieval Bestiaries, provides a reminder of international standards of human behavior that have endured through disparate cultures and a range of time spans to the present era. They also illustrate the importance of local voices in an ever-shrinking world, and it is all the more timely to remind the world of the importance of such standards of civility today, while celebrating the regional in global literatures. As an illustration of this principle, Table 1 presents some local/regional terms identified by the al Falahi family as typical of the Al Ain dialect Shamsa used. Young also advocates the use of English dialects in connection with the translation of literature (2013).

Table 1
Local Terms from the Al Ain Dialect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre/Theme/Title</th>
<th>Rhyme scheme</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Key use of Regional Dialect-Arabic dialects</th>
<th>Emirate-English Phonic translation</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shamsa-Mohammed al Falahi Untitled Hunting Dialogue (ganas)</td>
<td>maomumah (double mono-rhyme) (Holes, 2011)</td>
<td>7 lines</td>
<td>انچان الخز تبس رفعجه ولا جد الحضيه</td>
<td>Inchan probably; el khizaz deer; tais Mountain goat rufiat I swear; wa la jed he never; adhawwih winter camp for men</td>
<td>c. 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By contrast, *The Disease of Love* by Khalfan Musabah (1923-46) illustrates the talent of the Northern *al Hīrah* group and is published in Classical Standard Arabic. The poet was tutored by the al Quasimis, and the love poem (*ghazal*), can be contrasted to great effect with the language of the late Sheikh Zayed, who also composed many love poems (Ghanem, 2006). Sheikh Zayed al Nahyan was part Bedouin, and his choice of vocabulary is oftentimes much more regional, flavoured with the dialect of Al Ain. However, as it was rare to find a poet in the UAE writing in the villages educated in classical Arabic outside the royal family, which makes him an unusual local figure and a suitable choice for the study. His poem does not have the same use of local Arabic or the Bedouin themes.

Dā’ al hub.
Yaquluna el umura ila intiha’
Wa inni la ara minha intiha’
Bulitu bi a’dhami el adwa’i fetkan
Wa daa’u el hubbi laysa lahu shifaa’

(Musabah, 1990, p. 21)

The co-translation below was strongly endorsed by his niece and has been co-translated with Ali Afeefi, an Emirati. The poet was published posthumously, as like Keats, he died young. His is a lament of a disconsolate lover – a romantic agony, where the archetypical lover is sickening and fading from his malady. To live on he must sublimate his desire.

*The Disease of Love*

Things must come to an end they say,
Though to my mind, there is no end,
Cursed with the worse malady,
There is no cure for love.
(Trans. Ali Al Afeefi and Elizabeth Rainey)

The complexity of feelings created by such an infatuation has used oxymoron in the description. An intoxication with disabling effects, the emotional excess exercised by an unattainable desire ends with a declarative finality, and this conciseness makes the poem appear as a statement that remains unchallenged. The simple four line format conveys the topic directly, with the concluding line emphasizing his languishing passivity. The *aaba* scheme is dominated by a wistful “aaah” sound, giving a lulling quality to the poem. Following a conventional theme Musabah has achieved a status in the Emirates that many uncelebrated Bedouin composers have not, and the juxtaposition of their work emphasizes how the intangible heritage of the country is not being represented to its full potential even within the Emirates.
Placing Keats’s “La Belle Dame sans Merci” alongside “The Disease of Love” makes good use of a familiar English example which employs emotions just as intense.

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither’d from the lake,
And no birds sing.
(Keats, 1848/1995)

Keats’s knight has been entranced by the fairy world and is rendered desolate through the elfin encounter. The outcome in both cases seems wholly negative, since on the one hand the writer is cursed and stricken by disease, and on the other pale without respite in his barren topographical and emotional landscape. Both poems close with a final line that has an emphasis built around the strong yet negative stress, to heighten this sense of hopelessness. There are “no birds” and “no cure,” both indicative of the unremitting terminal nature of their condition. The strong rhyme also enhances this unrelenting predestined fate of the two lovers as the final line ends with the addition of “And no birds sing,” suggesting the despair is the result of the misuse of emotion, rather than placing faith in reason.

However, by contrast, the example used below of Chaucer in *The Book of the Duchess* (Benson, c. 1370/2008) is a love complaint for the untimely death of Lady Blanche of Lancaster from plague. Yet it ends with a mitigation of his sorrow for the good of the individual and society. Seen initially without all hope, there are later signs of recovery:

I have of sorwe so grete won,
That Joye get I never non,
Now that I see my lady bryght
Which I have loved with al my might,
Is from me ded, and ys agoon.
(Benson, 2008, 475-479)

Chaucer employs hunting and the assistance of a small dog to help unite the many thematic concerns of his poem: loss, death, love, and social order. Emotional restraint is counselled and the poem teaches finally the importance of moderate behavior, a major feature of the Middle Ages, according to Vaz de Silva (2013). Furthermore, the stories from French and Latin, incorporated alongside the emergence of Middle English as an accepted literary medium for the upper classes, show how a particular use of language and the old social order are tightly interwoven.

In its appeal to older forms of narrative, etiquette and representation, Mohammed’s *Dialogue* also advocates emotional restraint. The aspects of internal and external strife depicted in the hunt by Chaucer are also found in the moral example of the hunter and his dog. The importance of poetry in the continuity of social well-being and the celebration of the individual is celebrated both through *al Nabati* debate poetry and these two parallel Western forms.
Conclusion

Finally, while Arabic remains the language of social identity, Emiratis are increasingly comfortable with the co-translation of many of their cultural materials and the mediation of performative techniques to a wider cosmopolitan arena. In return for taking the best practices globally, domestic culture is aired both in a staged studio setting, but also in a more traditional intimate fashion. Through their translation and co-translation, an even wider audience is reached, and occasional players researching local oral poetry help consolidate interest in the dialects, safeguard older lexis, and heighten the Al Nabati profile internationally. This is a strategic use of soft power that shows the reach of the Emirates and the importance of bridging intangible heritage. Additionally, the positioning of the vernacular poetry of Bedouin pastoralists in translation is as much an assist for the non-Arabic speaking population as it is for the nationals who are struggling to recall their own private tribal dialects. Hence this communal exercise has the potential for a broader global application, a tribute to Bedouin ingenuity.

Such comparisons show us that despite the uncertainties caused by polarized camps in the world, our humanity attempts at every level to break down these socio-cultural barriers and uses poetry, both mainstream and regional World Arabics and Englishes, to remind us of personal, social, and inter-national standards of behaviour and civility. Such lessons play a vital role in influencing behavior, and it is all the more imperative that they are recalled in the present. We sorely need advocacy for humanity and civilized norms in a severely fractious world, and who better to help in such a task that the Al Falahi tribe from Al Ain, Robert Burns of Scotland, and the great Geoffrey Chaucer of London.

References


