

Pantun Translations into English in Women's Writings in Twentieth Century British Malaya

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Abstract

This paper is part of a larger historical study on Malay pantun translations into English since the nineteenth century. Two of the main aims of the historical study were: (1) to describe the prevalent translation styles adopted by the translators of pantun from the nineteenth century to the present times and (ii) to identify the extent to which the translation style is influenced by the skopos or translation purpose. The discussion in this paper is similarly directed by these two aims and is especially devoted to the only two women writers in British Malaya that is, Katherine Sim and Martha Blanche Lewis who highlighted the importance of the Malay pantun as an essential element of the Malay language and the ingenuity of the Malay mind. Sim's and Lewis's reference to/discussion of the pantun via translations in English in their referential texts (which total to about less than 160 pantun translations) contributed significantly towards promoting the pantun to an English readership in their times. The categorization of translation styles in this study is based on Christiane Nord's functional typology (1997), which is namely divided into two large categories: documentary (grammatically literal) translations and instrumental (creatively modulated/literary) translations.

Keywords: Malay–English translations, British women translators, pantun, skopos, documentary rendition, instrumental style

"Someone will remember us (women – writers, translators etc) [...] even in another time" – Sappho

1. Introduction

The generic four-line Malay pantun, a literary heritage of the Malay people, is found in translation in the English, Dutch, French and Chinese language. Of the relatively small numbers translated into these languages, the biggest total of pantun translations (i.e. at least a thousand quatrains) is available in the English language. The earliest Malay pantun translations into English can be found in a grammar dictionary published by William Marsden in 1812. Since Marsden's first few renditions, pantun quatrains into English have appeared in a range of text locations (like dictionaries, grammar manuals, letters, historical annals, oriental verse anthologies, pantun text references, academic papers etc) for a variety of reasons.

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by the translators of pantun from the nineteenth century to the present times and (ii) to identify the extent to which the translation style is influenced by the *skopos* or translation purpose.¹ The discussion in this paper is similarly directed by these two aims. Since identifying the translation purpose or function is an aim of this study, the categorization of translation styles in this study are based on Christiane Nord's functional typology, which is namely divided into two large categories: documentary (grammatically literal) translations and instrumental (creatively modulated/literary) translations.²

Most of the English translations of the Malay pantun over the three historical periods have been made available by male translators. During the period of the British rule in Malaya, it is a number of high-ranking male officers of the British Civil Service who had contributed significantly to the study of the Malay world through diverse scholarly activities, one of which was their involvement in collecting, studying and translating the pantun. Amongst these British civil servants were R. J. Wilkinson, Sir R. O. Winstedt and W. H. Hamilton³ whose Malay pantun translations into English are greatly appreciated and popularly quoted till this day.

In comparison to the men, needless to say, the extroverted/scholarly role of the women in colonial Malaya was far less defined, being relatively controlled by the greater call of domestic expectations.⁴ European women who had contact with British Malaya in the nineteenth and twentieth century namely belonged to one or more of the following three categories: (i) *memsahibs/mems*⁵ or wives of colonial officers, (ii) those who served in the Malayan Civil Service as teachers, nurses etc. and, (iii) travelers to the peninsula as a part of a larger exploration of the Eastern world. The numbers of European women who had come to British Malaya also follow the order of the categories listed. The first group, i.e. the European wives or *mems* in twentieth century Malaya are reported to have made significant contributions, "notably in the fields of literature and journalism"

¹ The main proponent of *Skopostheorie* is Hans J. Vermeer who states: "Any form of translational action, including therefore translation itself, may be conceived as an action [...]. Any action has an aim or purpose. [...] The word *skopos*, then, is a technical term for the aim or purpose of a translation [...] Further: an action leads to a "target text" (not necessarily a verbal one); translation leads to a *translatum* (i.e. the resulting translated text), as a particular variety of target text. (Venuti, 2000, p. 221)

² Nord provides a detailed discussion of her functional typology of translation styles in *Translation as a purposeful activity: functionalist approaches explained* (1997/2001).

³ Professor Muhammad Haji Salleh, Malaysia's poet laureate commends Hamilton's pantun translations in these words: "A.W. Hamilton's translation of *Malay Pantuns* is a pleasure to read. His smooth yet witty and intelligent renderings do justice to the subtlety and intricacies of the quatrain form" (1979, p. 142).

⁴ Janice N. Brownfoot in her article 'Memsahibs in Colonial Malaya: A Study of European Wives in a British Colony and Protectorate 1900 -1940' states that European wives whether in the 1830s Or 1930s were essentially "home-makers and mothers: occupations which not only directed their roles inside and outside domesticity, thus reinforcing their sense of corporate identity, but also determined their particular contributions and functions in the colonial situation" (in *The Incorporated Wife* edited by Callan & Ardener, 1984, pp. 194-195).

⁵ *Memsahib/mem* was often used as a respectful form of address by non-Europeans in South Asia (especially India) for a married European or upper-class woman. Now in allusive use, (chiefly historical) it is used with reference to expatriate life or manners, as in British India (*OED*).

(Brownfoot, 1984, p. 200), yet only an outstanding few are known to have chronicled their real life experiences in Malaya.

A survey on women's non-fiction writing on colonial Malaya only availed five substantial texts. They are *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither* (1883) by Isabella Bird (1831-1904), *To Siam and Malaya in the Duke of Sutherland's Yacht*, "Sans peur" (1889) by Florence Caddy (1837-1923), *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off* (1885/1993) by Emily Innes (1843-1927), *Through the Malay Archipelago* (1909) by Emily Richings and *Malayan Landscape* (1946) by Katharine Sim. Of these writers, only Sim makes a brief reference to the pantun – in *Malayan Landscape* and she later went on to write an entire book that provided valuable guidance to understanding this verse form. In Bird's, Caddy's and Innes's nineteenth century writings and Richings's early twentieth century account on the Malay peninsula, there is not to be found even a passing mention of the pantun or any other form of the Malay's literary art or love for music and song. Besides Sim, the only other woman author in pre-independence Malaya who cites and translates the pantun (although in a much smaller way than Sim) is M.B. Lewis.⁶ This paper is therefore devoted to these two British women in Malaya who played a part in bringing the pantun to the awareness of the English readers they were writing for in their time.

2. M.B. Lewis: Idiomatic Pantun Translations in Malay Language Learning Texts

M.B. (Martha Blanche) Lewis (dates unavailable) was a British teacher of Malay who served in the colonial education system in Malaya and was later a lecturer in Malay at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Lewis's books on the study of the Malay language are *Teach Yourself Malay* (1947)⁷, *Translation and Composition Exercises for Malay Students, with Additional Notes for the Guidance of English Students : Part 1*, (1952), *Learn to Talk Malay* (1954)⁸, *A Handbook of Malay Script : with Passages for Reading and a List of Commonly-Used Arabic Words* (1954) and *Sentence Analysis in Modern Malay: With Examples Drawn from Two Plays by Za'ba* (1969).⁹

In her brief discussion on the pantun in *Teach Yourself Malay*, Lewis comments that "the words of a pantun are usually simple, but they are seldom easy to translate because the 'scanty plot of narrow ground' demands an

⁶ Women's association with the study and translation of the pantun appears to be a rarity. Like Sim and Lewis of the pre-independence period, only two women in the post-independence period have made available a number of pantun translations in English. Both are native speakers of Malay: Hasnah Ibrahim and Maimunah Daud. Hasnah's pantun translations can be found in *Anthology of ASEAN Literature – Malaysia: Indigenous Traditions* (1985/1993) and Maimunah's in *The Romance of Sarawak Malay Pantun* (2004).

⁷ *Teach Yourself Malay* (1947) was later republished as *Malay* (1968).

⁸ *Learn to Talk Malay* was an attempt at presenting the Malay language "through the medium of contemporary conversational material", to compile "livelier teaching material to present to our non-Malay students" (1954, p. v).

⁹ *Sentence Analysis in Modern Malay* was written for the following purpose: "The book has been written primarily as a working textbook for second-year university students reading Malay" (1969, p. xi).

economy of expression that exceeds even the succinctness of everyday Malay speech” (1947, p. 316). Lewis cites a total of five pantun quatrains and an additional intent couplet in three of her Malay language study guides. Through a variety of well-managed modulations, Lewis succeeds in preserving the brevity and rhythm of the pantun. She provides her learners of Malay pleasant-sounding, lively versions of pantun in English. The following presents four of these quatrains:

(Lewis, 1947, p. 315)	
<i>Banyak orang bergelang tangan, Sahaya sa-orang bergelang kaki. Banyak orang larang jangan, Sahaya sa-orang turut hati.</i>	Bangle worn on wrist's the fashion, I wear mine another way. Others bid me curb my passion. What care I what others say?
(Lewis, 1947, p. 419)	
<i>Anak buruk di kayu rendang, Turun mandi di dalam paya. Hodoh buruk di mata orang, Cantik manis di mata saya.</i>	In the swamp the monkeys play, Swinging down from leafy tree. Plain, uncomely, others say; Sweet and fair she seems to me.
(Lewis, 1954, p. 158)	
<i>Kalau ada kapok di-ladang Boleh saya menumpang padi. Kalau ada 'umor panjang Dapat kita berjumpa lagi.</i>	If there's a rice-bin in your field, With you I'll store my grain. If length of years the Fates but yield, We too shall meet again.
(Lewis, 1954, p. 210) <i>Tikar puchok, tikar mengkuang Alas nikah raja Melayu. Ikan busok jangan di-buang, Buat perencah si-daun kayu.</i>	(Lewis, 1954, p. 254) Screw-pine mats both fine and coarse ones, Princes' wedding-mats she weaves. Fish that's tainted waste not – make it Relish for your salad-leaves.

Lewis's translations firstly distinctly show that, like Hamilton, she competently maintains a strict regiment of producing lines with perfectly regular metre. By restricting the lines to a tight six to eight syllables, Lewis succeeds in reflecting the laconic character of the pantun. In fact, Lewis manages to convey her lines in a trimmer and more compact form than the lines in the ST. Her sound recreations are basically focussed on imitating the pantun's standard end-rhyme. However, in the fourth pantun example, Lewis's priority is clearly to generate a tidy set of lines (8, 7, 8, 7 syllables) for the effect of a perfectly-balanced rhythm. The attempt to formulate a neat pair of end-sounds is clearly overtaken by this priority. Only “weaves” / “leaves” (lines 2 & 4) rhyme in the last poem unlike the perfect end-rhymes achieved in the first three pantun translations.

In order to produce the desired effect of crisp, rhythmic pantuns in English, Lewis has exercised a series of modulations in most of the poems' lines. The following lists an example of a shift from each of the poems above: (i)

First pantun, line 1 - *Banyak orang bergelang tangan/* ‘many people (are wearing) bracelets (on their hands)’ is transferred as “Bangles worn on wrists the fashion”. The ST syntax is inverted and the reference to the human subject is omitted; (ii) Second pantun, line 2 - *Turun mandi di dalam paya/* ‘Descend (to) bathe in (the) swamp’ is rendered as “Swinging down from leafy tree”. In this transfer, the line is totally re-formulated; this however, does not distort the general meaning of the poem; (iii) Third quatrain, line 3 - *Kalau ada ‘umor panjang/* ‘If (I) have long life’ is represented as “If length of years the Fates but yield”. Lewis has provided a more poetic rephrasing of the line, and (iv) Fourth quatrain, line 3 - *Ikan busok jangan di-buang/* ‘Fish (that’s) rotten do not throw away’. Lewis has rephrased the surface meaning of this line as “Fish that’s tainted waste not”. *Ikan busok jangan di-buang* however is not just about rotten fish. It is a saying advising one to think twice before getting rid of things that are old or things that have been used for long as there is the likelihood that these things could be re-used or re-cycled to produce something new.¹⁰ Lewis’s decision to retain the figurative phrase without an attempt to explicate its connotative meaning is obviously necessary to preserve the brevity of the lines.

The next two of Lewis’s pantun translations will be compared with Winstedt’s and Hamilton’s earlier versions.¹¹ The first quatrain can be considered as a farewell pantun or a longing for the next romantic rendezvous:

*Dari mana hendak ka-mana?
Tinggi rumput dari padi.
Tahun mana bulan yang mana
Boleh kita berjumpa lagi?*

(Lewis, 1954, p. 157)

(Lewis, 1954, p. 157)	(Hamilton, 1982, p. 87) Title: ‘Meeting in Store’
Coming whence and going wither? Higher the grass than the grain. What the month and what the year When we two meet again?	Whence are you and where away? Grass is taller than the grain. When will be the year and day That we two shall meet again?
(Winstedt, 1957, p. 11)	(Winstedt, 1957, p. 12)
Whence would you and whither? Taller the grass than the grain. When year, and when the season, Shall it pass we meet again?	High towers the grass where once we’d meet and wander ‘Twist yonder fields of golden grain; Ah! years may pass, and moons may fleet how many, Ere we fond lovers meet again.

¹⁰ In Malay the meaning is explained as follows: *Kita tidak harus membuang barang yang sudah lama atau barang yang telah kita gunakan kerana kemungkinan barang itu boleh diguna semula atau dapat menghasilkan produk yang baru.* (Najmuddin et. al., 2007, p. 24)

¹¹ Winstedt’s earlier version in *Pantun Melayu* was published in 1914 while Hamilton’s rendition appeared in *Pantun Melayu/Malay Pantuns* in 1941.

The ST is expressed in relatively simple and straightforward language; the reference to the swifter growth of *rumpul*/'grass' than *padi*/'paddy', even if taken metaphorically, is uncomplicated. As a metaphor, it lends itself to a sense of universality; "taller the grass than the grain"¹² expresses the unfruitful passage of time the persona has to endure in the absence of his beloved. Lewis's lines here are therefore mostly literal grammatical transfers; the only non-obligatory shift she makes is in line 3 where, for the sake of a partial rhyme, the order of the reference to *tahun*/'year' and *bulan*/'month' is reversed. Lewis also imitates the parallelisms expressed within lines 1 and 3 of the ST to echo the evenly repeated rhythm within these lines. Hamilton's version is, like Lewis's, literal with one or two more very slight modifications. Lewis, like Hamilton, despite the very minimal modulations manages to create the end-rhymes and maintains short lines.

Winstedt provides two versions: the first, an overall literal one like Lewis and Hamilton, while the second is offered as an example of the "experience of the brevity of Malay" that must be understood "to expand the bare words to their full meaning" (1957, p. 11). Winstedt's second 'picturesque' rendition of lovers, "wander(ing)" in "towers of grass" or amidst "fields of golden grain", and counting the passing of "moons" in desperate anticipation of their next meeting is an imaginative expansion of the ST. Such instrumentality reveals the potential of translation to transform the dull, bare or plain to a life-like exuberance. Lewis in providing her rendition in a Malay language learning text understandably does not venture into such expanded creativity; she does not apply an instrumentality beyond what is required to meet the purpose of her Malay language learners.

For the second and final example, Lewis has only translated the intent couplet while Winstedt and Hamilton have provided a full translation of the ST. There is a slight structural variation (highlighted) in the last line of the source text's intent couplet quoted by Lewis, Winstedt and Hamilton. Below are the ST lines followed by the translations:

*Imam kadhi lagi berdosa,
Konon pula saya yang jahil.*
When elders err and judges sin,
Shall we, their flock, not fall?

(Lewis, 1969, p. 216)

*Teritip di-tepi kota,
Mari di-kayoh sampan pengail.
Imam khatib lagi berdosa,
Bertambah pula kita yang jahil.*

(Winstedt, 1969, p. 197)

¹² "Taller the grass than the grain" could quite likely remind the English reader of the biblical analogy of 'tares choking the wheat'.

*Teritip di tepi kota,
Mari dikayuh sampan pengail.
Imam khatib lagi berdosa,¹³
Inikan pula kita yang jahil!*

(Hamilton, 1982, p. 57)

(Winstedt, 1957, p. 6; 1969, p. 19; 1959, p. 422)	(Hamilton, 1982, p. 56) Title: 'To Err is Human'
Let's paddle, dear, by yonder fort, Pick mussels off the wall. May we not err of layman sort, When priests and parsons fall?	Where barnacles cling to the fort, Come, let us row a fishing smack. Where priests and scribes in sin are caught, What chance for us who learning lack?

A close word-for-word transfer of the intent couplet, *Imam kadhi lagi berdosa/ Konon pula saya yang jahil* would be: '(when) spiritual heads (and their) scribes even (more) sin/ It would be said too (that) I am ignorant (especially of things religious)'. Lewis's transfer of this meaning couplet is a dynamically modulated representation in terms of lexical choice and structure but as always, the essence of the ST message is effectively conveyed. This is also the case with Winstedt's "May we not err of layman sort, / When priests and parsons fall?" (where, lines 3 and 4 of the ST are conveniently reversed for rhyming purposes) and Hamilton's "Where priests and scribes in sin are caught, / What chance for us who learning lack?". Lewis's discipline of casting the pantun into six to eight syllabic lines is consistent throughout. And in this couplet, she again reflects, even if only in part, the sound poem that the pantun typically stands for. Lewis produces an effective alliteration in "elders err" "elders ... and judges sin" and "flock ... fall". The quieter vowel and sibilant sounds which precede the fricative /f/ consonant sounds are meaningfully juxtaposed; the quieter sounds suggest the unseen transgressions of spiritual leaders concealed under their cloaks of religiosity in contrast to laymen, who are more vulnerable to scandalous judgement. The flock's "fall" is that much the harder for it scarcely escapes the close scrutiny and grapevine of its fellowmen.

Lewis's attitude towards poetry translation, as an art that stands accountable to both the meaning and form in the ST, is clearly evident. This view is markedly resonant in Winstedt's and Hamilton's creative translations of the Malay pantun. Lewis's intention to "compile livelier teaching material [...] for non-Malay students" (1954, p. v) in her Malay language learning texts is certainly reflected in her instrumental pantun transpositions.

3. Katharine Sim: Unveiling the Malay Mind via Lucid Grammatical Pantun Renditions

Katharine Sim (1913 – date of death unknown) became deeply interested in the Malay language and the Malay way of life during her sojourn in Malaya. She

¹³ Hamilton glosses *Imam* as 'spiritual head of the congregation of a mosque and the leader at prayers' and *Khatib* as 'scribe or clerk under the Imam who reads the Friday sermon' (1982, p. 98).

had lived in Malaya long enough to enable her to chronicle the various aspects of the Malayan landscape in her books. And, as a professional artist she was also involved in capturing on canvass subjects of oriental inspiration, in particular portraits of the varied races she had an opportunity to meet in Malaya. Winstedt (1969, pp. 11-12) who wrote the introduction to Sim's (1969) edition of the *Malayan Landscape*, first published in 1946, attests to this:

“What reward could I expect for my offer to read the manuscript of a book on Malaya by a new author I had never met? [...] Was I not doomed to share once more Marianne Dashwood's boredom at being told that “in the East Indies the climate is hot and the mosquitoes are troublesome”? The arrival of the typescript that was the chrysalis of these coloured chapters affected me like the inexorability of a Monday morning. And then after reading a few pages I perked up. Virtue for once was to be its own reward. [...]

“Malaya has captured her, and her pulses race untired and exploring through quiet hours terribly apt to dispirit Europeans of less spiritual enterprise. What is more, she can get this personality of hers across the page, which is the whole duty of artist and biographer”.

Sim first arrived in Malaya from England as a young *memsahib* accompanying her husband, Stuart Sim, a civil servant in the Customs. Stuart at that point was posted to the Customs at Parit Buntar, Perak. The first chapter of *Malayan Landscape* begins with the narration of the journey to this customs post from Penang Island. Sim's foreword to her 1969 edition of *Malayan Landscape* reveals her enduring love for Malaya and her ever-growing desire to be better acquainted with it.

“[R]eading through *Malayan Landscape* now, twenty-three years after its first appearance in 1946, has renewed my home-sickness for a land which I shall always love with undying warmth; one to which I am deeply indebted for some of the happiest, gayest, most colourful years of my life – and most productive years too, since there I could always work in peace and quiet. Malaya has much to inspire both brush and pen.

“But *Malayan Landscape* was my first book and I was young when I wrote it, young not only in age but in my knowledge of Malaya. I had lived there for just a little over three years when the Japanese invaded; I had only so-called “kitchen Malay”. But, scanty though my understanding of Malayan peoples may have been, the country appealed to me enormously, so great was its fascination that I could think of few other places when I was sent home by sea two weeks before the fall of Singapore. Then, as now, the desire to return was ardent.

“My husband survived the rigours of two Japanese P.O.W. camps in Sumatra and two torpedoings, and we eventually returned to Malaya as a family in 1947. Then I began in earnest to learn about the country I loved so well; previously in my three youthful, glib years, my knowledge had been superficial, although my impressions had run deep indeed” (p. 7).

Sim also recounts how she continued during her final period of stay in Malaya to make a conscious and concerted effort to embrace the different cultures in Malaya. She had even ventured to write under a Malay pseudonym for a local English paper. This, she says, was accomplished during her “last five years in Kuala Lumpur before and after Merdeka until ‘Malayanized’ in 1960”, when she and Stuart “retired prematurely” (p. 8). All of these efforts, she states, opened for her rich horizons of experience.

“In Penang, after the war, I studied things Hindu and, under the patient guidance of my old and dear friend C.S. Wong, of Chinese affairs – things Chinese. Later, in the truly Malay state of Negeri Sembilan, I began to learn Malay seriously for the first time and with the tuition of Munshi K-R. Ja’amat of Malacca, I took and passed the Government examinations standards I and II, and so naturally acquired a better understanding of Malay customs and the Malay way of life. [...] During this time (1955-1960) in Kuala Lumpur, I wrote as “Nuraini” a considerable number of *Profiles and Personalities* for the *Malay Mail*; a series of articles which brought me into direct contact with a wide cross-section of the public from diplomats to dancing girls, priests and teachers to Eastern fisherman and silversmiths, whose co-operation opened up for me an endless vista of ideas and fresh fields of thought” (pp. 7-8).

On re-visiting *Malayan Landscape* more than two decades later, she says that all this knowledge gained after its writing has made her aware that she “would not have dreamt of uttering in the richer light of her fuller, more adult understanding and love of Malaya’s people” some of the “things and expressions” that she unfortunately had written and which were “not possible to edit out” (p. 8).

Since her first book, Katharine Sim went on to produce a number of other fictional and non-fictional writings. *Malacca Boy* (1957), *Black Rice* (1959/1961) and *The Jungle Ends Here* (1961) are her fictional works. Her non-fictional books, besides *Malayan Landscape* (1946), include *These I Have Loved* (1947), *Flowers of the Sun* (1957) republished as *More Than a Pantun: Understanding Malay Verse* (1987), *Journey Out of Asia* (1963), *Costumes of Malaya* (1963), *Desert Traveller: The Life of Jean Louis Burckhardt* (1969) and the life of an artist, *David Roberts R.A., 1796-1864 : A Biography* (1984).

In relation to Sim’s appreciation of the Malay pantun, she begins by confessing her initial lack of understanding of the real pleasures of poetry. She touches on this briefly in her foreword to *Malayan Landscape*:

“I must have been wrong about the enjoyment of poetry: since my husband came back from the Far East with an ability, acquired in prison camp, to quote poetry for two hours on end. In addition, I had not yet discovered the charm and romance, the passion and beauty of the *pantun*, the Malay quatrain, which was to fascinate me so much that I wrote a small book (*Flowers of the Sun*, 1957) on the subject” (pp. 8-9).

Unlike Wilkinson and Winstedt¹⁴, Sim never directly addresses the kind of difficulties a non-native speaker of Malay might face in understanding pantuns let alone translating them. Her attempts to unravel the nuances contained in the sayings and proverbs in the pantuns presented in *More Than a Pantun*, however, reveal part of what comprises the “magic of inevitable phrase” (*Pantun Melayu*, 1957, p. 20) which Winstedt refers to as being a challenge. Sim stresses the importance of understanding the Malay’s “symbolism, his love for hidden meanings, his metaphors and veiled sayings, his philosophy” (p.12) in order to better appreciate the pantun and its creators. Her aim, therefore, in writing *More than a Pantun* is, as she states below:

“It is my intention in this essay to touch on them (proverbs) where they are used, or at least on some of the most famous; also to bring out where possible the various, most frequently occurring metaphors and to explain them, and some of the more attractive sayings, and the expressions that are most familiar” (p. 13).

While the Malay proverbs and maxims in pantuns might express a universally shared thought or belief, they are often dressed in references and metaphorical images particular to the Malay culture. It is this element of parochial peculiarity that does not always make proverbs and idioms easily transferable. In *More Than a Pantun*, Sim provides an insightful commentary on groups of pantuns which have similar themes or which use the same allusions and metaphors. The pantun translations into English that Sim provides alongside the original poems and her expository narrative are for the sole purpose of elucidating the Malay sentiment expressed in the pantun’s figurative language. As such, she chooses to be generally literal in her English translations, without being concerned about the “jingling rhythm” as Hamilton is.

“On the whole I shall try to translate more or less literally so that the use of similes and proverbs can be clearly seen, and also to retain something of the essence and feeling of each pantun, which I personally, perhaps mistakenly, think can be better expressed in plain

¹⁴ Wilkinson discusses the challenges of translating the pantun in *Papers on Malay subjects: Malay literature, part 1: romance, history, poetry* (1907) while Winstedt points out the difficulties in his preface to *Pantun Melayu* (1957).

simple English, rather than in customary somewhat stilted rhyming translation” (Sim, 1987, p. 13).

Sim’s practice, on the whole, matches her intent; her translations are grammatical literal transfers. Where it is easy enough to closely echo the diction or expressions in the original, she attempts to do so as in the example below.

*Jangan cupar cempedak bongkok,
Cempedak bongkok banyak bijinya,
Jangan cupar orang buruk,
Orang muda baik budi-nya;*

(Sim, 1987, p. 46)

The pantun appears in *Hikayat Awang Sulong Merah Muda*. A woman curses Awang Sulong, the young hero in this tale who is disguised as a black Negrito. The poem is the hero’s reply to the woman. Wilkinson’s instrumental encoding of the same pantun shows up Sim’s more documentary approach to her translations.

(Sim, 1987, p. 47)	(Wilkinson, 1959, p. 242)
Don’t curse the bent jack-fruit tree, Even a bent one has many seeds, Don’t curse a shabby fellow, He may well be young and gentle.	Oh, don’t miscall a crooked jack; That jack has a many luscious pod; Nor curse a youth for being black, He may be black and dear to God.

Sim, as she states, is uninterested in conjuring the pantun’s formal technicalities. As such, a ‘stray’ occurrence of some sound-play or metre regularity could be assumed to be incidental or unmotivated. Her imitations of the parallel structures (*Jangan cupar.../ “Don’t curse...”* in lines 1 and 3), however, are evidently conscious reinstatements as she is constant in this respect. Sim maintains the repeated patterning as it obviously aids her in achieving the literalness she aims at. Unlike Sim, it is often less important for Wilkinson to reproduce the parallelisms in the pantun, as evident in his translation above. Wilkinson’s greater focus is on recasting to a reasonable measure the pantun’s rhythm and rhyme and achieving poetic beauty via lexical variance. Sim’s unrhymed and metrically irregular translations, on the other hand, are understandably so because she has purposefully prioritized offering the poem’s thoughts as expressed by the semantic range of the ST.

While Sim often strives to provide equivalent signifiers in the target language, she does, on some rare occasion, retract from her intended translational regime. As such, her translations are not all strictly literal. The next pantun is a good example of how Sim too modulates in small but significant ways. Sim’s translation of this quatrain will be compared with Hamilton’s.

*Kelip-kelip api di dusun;
Anak Keling bergelang kaca,
Bukan mati kerana racun,
Mati dijeling ekor mata.*

(Sim, 1987, p. 47)

(Sim, 1987, p. 47)	(Hamilton, 1941, p. 22). Title: 'Killing Glances'
In the orchard fireflies flicker; There's a Tamil girl with fragile bangles, It's not poison that I'm dying, But from her dark sidelong glances.	Where twinkling lights in orchards glitter, Glass bangles deck a Tamil maid. I die not from some poison bitter, But from your sidelong glance I fade.

A near word-to-word translation of the above is 'fireflies or twinkling lights in the orchard/Indian girl adorned with glass (bangles) / not dying because of poison/dying (from the) glances (she steals from) the tip (of her) eyes'. Here, Sim embellishes the expressive element of the pantun at two points. First, in line 2, she modulates by substituting 'bangles of glass' (i.e. "glass bangles" as Hamilton closely translates it) with "fragile bangles", a non-equivalent transfer. The tangible reference to "glass" is replaced by "fragile", an abstraction that suggests a quality of breakability and therefore, the need for care. The second modulation is the addition of "dark" to qualify the sidelong glances. The adjective not only suggests the dark colour of the Tamil woman but also creates nuances such as the unknown mysteries that lie in her person, the intense charm of her eyes etc, all of which entice and overpower the persona with a death-like swoon. The contrast of "fragile" with "dark" also leaves much for interpretation. Sim is in fact relatively more instrumental than Hamilton in this translation, considering the range of additional meanings she has evoked through these modulations. But, it must be emphasized that it is a rare practice with Sim to modulate lexically or semantically, though she does so more frequently syntactically for the sake of grammaticality.

4. Conclusion

Both Lewis and Sim explicitly state the objective of their writings. Lewis's Malay language learning texts are obviously aimed at fulfilling an educative/instructive function. Quite similarly, Sim's expositions in *More than a Pantun* also aim to serve a referential purpose. Sim provides useful information on understanding the Malay mind through the Malay's use of idioms, proverbs and metaphors in the pantun. And in their choice of translation styles too, they are clearly guided by a specific intent which is influenced by the needs of the English readership they are writing for. Lewis decides her non-Malay learners need "livelier learning materials" (1954, p. v), and in accordance pantuns are cited and translated in as lively a form as deemed appropriate. Likewise, Sim wishes to lay bare the figurative use of pantun language without any creative intrusion, and correspondingly, she adopts a literal grammatical translation style. Both Lewis's relatively more instrumental pantun translations and Sim's

generally documentary renditions are therefore clearly target-oriented. This is manifest in their efforts “to make identification similarly possible for target readers” (Nord, 2001, p. 97). In other words, both Lewis and Sim are functional translators working towards meeting a specific need of the target audience.

The first half of the twentieth century, the period within which Lewis’s and Sim’s translations were produced, not only made available the largest total of pantun translations into English but also the boldest creative formulations of the pantun by a group of male British civil servants (R.J. Wilkinson, R.O. Winstedt, J.L. Humphreys, C.W. Harrison and A.W. Hamilton) who believed in preserving the spirit of the pantun in the natural freshness of their own tongue. Lewis makes up another significant number in this greater majority of instrumental pantun translators of the first half of the twentieth century while Sim belongs to the much smaller camp of literal translators of this period alongside translators like William G. Shellabear whose pantun translations in his English version of the *Sejarah Melayu* (1896) are semantically close translations.

Finally, the comparative analysis of Lewis’s and Sim’s pantun translations with Wilkinson’s, Winstedt’s and Hamilton’s renditions make it evident that as women translators, Lewis’s and Sim’s translational styles are not distinctly different from the male British translators of their time.

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