

Reçu le: 30/09 / 2023 Accepté le: 05/01 / 2024 Publié le: 05/01 / 2024



## Translated Arabic literature and the Politics of Cultural Dominance Instances of Female Novelists Translated into English

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**ABSTRACT:**

The power turn in translation studies has positioned translation in general and literary translation in particular beyond an innocent activity of bridging languages and mediating cultures. At this juncture, literary translation has become a *par-excellence* value-laden and politically driven process. In the translation of Arabic literary works, mainly written by women, issues such as manipulation, representation, subversion and dominance come to the fore. This descriptive-analytical study, through analysing a number of Arabic novels translated into English, comparing them with the original ones and situating them within a broader socio-political and cultural contexts, highlights the western translators' dominance over the translation act and the translation process. The study elucidated that the translated novels were dominated by the western translators jointed with lack or minimal agency of authors, and they were subject to various manipulative tactics that resulted in blatant alterations of the source text to conform the western translators' and publishers' interests, serve their agendas and meet the target environment's expectations.

**Keywords:** Arabic novel, cultural dominance, manipulation, translation, West.

ملخص البحث

إن ارتباط الفعل الترجمي بالسلطة والهيمنة الثقافية أدى في كثير من الأحيان إلى وضع الترجمة - بشكل عام والترجمة الأدبية بشكل خاص - خارج نطاق النشاط البريء المتمثل في مد الجسور بين اللغات والثقافات. وعلى إثر ذلك، أضحت الترجمة الأدبية عملية مدفوعة سياسيا بامتياز. وقد تجلّى ذلك في عديد من الأعمال الأدبية العربية المترجمة لاسيما الكتابات النسوية منها التي تتبدّى من خلالها صور التحريف والتلاعب والهيمنة والحياد عن النص الأصلي. في ذات السياق، تهدف هذه الدراسة الوصفية التحليلية إلى الوقوف على عدد من الروايات العربية المترجمة إلى الإنجليزية ومقارنتها بالروايات الأصلية ووضعها ضمن سياقات اجتماعية وسياسية وثقافية أوسع، لتسلط الضوء على هيمنة المترجمين الغربيين على الفعل الترجمي. كما أثبتت الدراسة أن الروايات المترجمة تخضع إلى هيمنة ثقافية يفرضها المترجمون الغربيون في سلطة تكاد تكون منعدمة للكاتبات العربيات على ترجمة أعمالهن التي خضعت لمختلف أساليب التلاعب التي أدت إلى تعديلات صارخة في النص المصدر لتتوافق مع اهتمامات المترجمين والناشرين الغربيين خدمة لأجنداتهم وتلبية لتوقعات البيئة المستهدفة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرواية العربية النسوية، الهيمنة الثقافية، التلاعب، الترجمة، الغرب.

**1. Introduction:**

Indisputably, translation has always been an activity with a delicate role in facilitating communication between individuals with different cultural and linguistic affiliations. This role has become lucid with the incessant (hyper)mobility, be it virtual or physical, that characterises today's world and that is nurtured by a myriad of factors and rendered contacts between individuals more soaring than ever before. Howbeit, translation, in its power turn, has transcended the role of bridging the gap between two languages and mediating two cultures. In crude terms, translation in general and literary translation in particular has become a politically driven process and a site of cultural encounters, power struggles, and ideological competitions. Undeniably, both literature and translation are value-laden processes wielding enormous power in sounding certain voices and silencing others. Coates (1996) succinctly puts it, "literature is not innocent. Neither is translation" (p. 215). The situation is lucid when the Arab literature is translated into western languages and more particularly into English. What makes the situation aggravates more is when the translation is undertaken for the works written by Arab female authors.

Beyond any shadow of doubt, literature is one of the cultural products of the context in which it is initiated and produced. It is a carrier of the cultural peculiarities of the authors' cultural and social environment. However, though translation is an activity of cultural exchange that proffers immense opportunities for readers to know about other cultures and to view the world from an outsider's perspective, literary translation from the periphery of Arab and Muslim countries into English has often been characterised by a one-way flow of culture rather than a process of reciprocal exchange of cultures. In crude terms, western translators often substitute the cultural peculiarities of the source text with the one of the receiving environment to meet the target readers' expectations and to gain wider readership and more importantly to promote for the receiving environment's culture and silencing the culture embedded in the source text. This manipulation in translation is often a sign of cultural dominance that aims at foregrounding certain cultures and backgrounding others through translation and imposing on authors to assimilate to the western translators and publishers' norms if they aspire to gain visibility and advantage overseas. The situation is prominent when the literature is written by Arab women who tackle issues that are preferable to the western translators and the western readers and who are often more submissive to the western canons and norms of translation and exhibit readability to alter their works to conform to the translators' requirements as in the case of the novels that will be analysed through this study.

Translation of literary works written by women has always proved that translation has often been a tool for constructing defamatory images to (mis)represent the other. Research in this area still needs more efforts and scrutiny to be investigated and explored by researchers to visualise how the translation of Arab female literary works are dominated by the western translators and are subjects to blatant alterations and manipulations of the source text. Jointed to this, the lack of agency of the female authors who lack authority and decision making over their works during the translation process. Ergo, The present research attempts to fill in this gap within translation studies by examining plethora of ways in which western translators dominate the translation process through the careful selection of works to be translated, the strategies used for translation, the changes made upon the source text, the publishing policies and the dissemination of the works to the target reader and, hence, constructing incendiary images of the Arabs in the absence of agency of Arab authors over their works.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Translation Main Shifts: An Overview**

At the outset, the premise that permeated the translation process was restricted to bridging two languages by finding equivalents and the role of the translator was confined to rewording meaning from the source language into the target one. Translation, under this discourse, used to be studied from a linguistic perspective and used to be seen as a process of meaning transposition. Under this spirit, Catford (1965) describes it as a process that implies "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)" (p.20). In crude terms, Claramonte (2009) puts it as "a synonym for finding an equivalent for a source text, for saying the same thing in another language, for replacing or substituting" (p.39). Referring to the linguistic-oriented approach, Gambier (2015) states that "translation was seen as a mechanical process, a word-by-word substitution, a problem of dictionaries, or simply an activity that accrues no apparent prestige and which can be handed off at any moment to a bilingual relative or colleague" (p. 887). According to Gambier, the translators' understandings of translation as a mechanical conversion that focuses on the lexical similarity of texts and the popular assumption that a text to be translated is nothing more than a linear sequence of words or phrases and requires no more than a competent use of the dictionary and grammar without accrediting any attention to the role culture in translation.

Undeniably, linguistic approaches to translation have been subject to criticism. To this end, serious endeavours moved translation in the bygone years beyond its narrow understanding towards shiny ones that rendered translation an act that helps in ensuring peaceful coexistence and social cohesion. Under this spirit, the cultural dimension in translation has gained ground and momentum as translation has moved towards a new turn labelled the cultural turn.

The cultural turn in Translation Studies was first introduced by Snell-Hornby (1988). She rejects the notion of equivalence that permeated the realm of translation previously. In her view, it is unacceptable for translation to hinge on assumptions that promote for "an illusion of symmetry between languages which hardly exists beyond the level of vague approximations and which distorts the basic problems of translation" (Snell-Hornby, 1988, p. 22). Since language does not operate in a vacuum but a construct intricately intertwined with culture, it is inevitably shaped by the culture of the translator and the external social factors. By the same token, referring to the interplay of language and culture in the translation process, Larson (1984) postulates, "language is a part of culture and, therefore, translation from one language to another cannot be done adequately without a knowledge of the two cultures as well as the two languages structure" (p. 431). Following this move, the translators' role has shifted from "transferors of words and sentences between languages to mediators of culture and cross-cultural communicative functions" (Bedecker & Feinauer, 2009, p. 133).

This turn has gained momentum among scholars who furthered it to garner more ground beyond a narrow linguistic approach. This novel turn has been adopted by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere who became its advocates in translation studies. The acceptance of the turn is reflected in the many works that followed its introduction such as Lefevere and Bassnett (1990), Lefevere (1992), Toury (1995), Venuti (1995), Bassnett and Lefevere (1998), Bassnett (2003).

This massive intellectual movement urged to shift the focus from language to culture. Bassnett and Lefevere stressed the significance of the role of culture in translation, the influence of the cultural background on the translator, the social background that can affect the translation process, the subjectivity of translators that can lead to manipulation, etc. Cutting it short, Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) succinctly put, "neither the word, nor the text, but the culture becomes the operational 'unit' of translation" (p. 8). Parallel to this, Shirinzadeh and Mahadi (2015) contend, "nowadays, the issue of bilinguality or knowing another language is not the only prerequisite for being a translator; in this fast moving world, translators should be primarily cultural experts" (p. 167). The cultural turn in translation has brought about substantial changes in the understandings, aims and methods of translation and the role of the

translator as well.

Time and again, assigned the role of mediation, translators played an indispensable role in bridging different languages, geographical spaces and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, this does not mean, as Maria Tymoczko (2003) argues, that they occupy a 'space between' in a neutral or free way. Rather, "they are committed to one cultural framework and to an ideology or a dominant agenda" (p. 201). The role of the translator is not always that innocent and neutral. The subjectivity of the translator can deprive the translation act from its role of mediation and exchange and may have nefarious effects on the translation quality and on the readers' understandings and interpretations as well. Certainly, Mistakes in translating discourses could lead to villainous and wicked consequences. That is case when mistranslation occurs due to lack of comprehension and knowledge that guide language use in different contexts. Eventually, the consequences can be extremely egregious when mistranslations are performed intentionally nurtured by certain ideologies and aims with myriad of varying forms. However, since the cultural turn was introduced by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (1990) for translation, mainly translation of literary works, translation is regarded as a site of power struggles and contestations instead of an innocent act of linguistic and cultural transposition. At this juncture, a move towards a power turn in translation was primordial. The novel paradigm shift examines translation from a power perspective. Lefevere (1992) states that the cultural understandings of translation do not capture fully the different shifts in translation. Rather, these shifts should be understood in the power relations that govern language, culture, and literary productions.

## 2.2 Translation and Power

The power turn in translation brought about a sequel to translation studies where power, subversion, manipulation, and appropriation have become central to the translation process. In this regard, Faiq (2018) contends that "translation becomes the site for examining a plethora of issues: race, gender, colonialism and its post phase, publishing policies, censorship and otherness" (p. 438).

The power turn has redefined translation as a site of competing ideologies, cultural confrontations and power struggles. Translation Studies, under this spirit, stress the social and historical contexts and their effect on the translator and the power plays that dictate what to translate, how to translate, and why to translate. Truly, not only the translator who plays a role in making decisions about translations, but different players including the translator, the publisher, the politicians, the audience, etc. Scrutinizing the translation processes and acts, it becomes apparent that "translation in all its forms is frequently the site of a variety of power plays between the actors involved. Some of these are quite deliberate manipulations of the original for a wide variety of reasons, ranging from the desire to save money to the desire to control behaviour, from the desire to follow perceived norms to the desire for cultural hegemony (Fawcett, 1995, p. 177). Certainly, this is, in fact, blatant in the conditions surrounding and accompanying the translation process starting from the selection of works to be translated, the strategies used in translation and the purpose of the translation act. Translation, with the power turn, has become a political act, a politically-driven process. Jacquemond (1992) argues that translation is the product of its social and historical context and replicates the power asymmetries.

It might prove interesting to state that translation as a form of knowledge wields enormous power as it exerts a tremendous role in establishing power hierarchies, maintaining power inequalities and perpetuating the atavistic discourse of the superior *self* and the inferior *Other* with an aim of political hegemony and control over the other. In different terms, "translations represent the source-text, they create an image of the source text, and doing this, they create our knowledge, not only about the text they translate, but about the culture these texts originate in"



(Nergaard, 2004, p. 38). Undoubtedly, translation is an act with a delicate role that helps in the construction, representation and exclusion of the exotic Other.

The power turn in translation offers much leeway to understand the dialectic of power relations and to grasp the different final facets a translated text may have impacted by the social and historical context in which the translation process takes place and by the ideology and the social and cultural orientations of the translator. Thus, the translated text can not be read in devoid of political considerations.

Truly, the same text translated from a language *A* to a language *B* can have different versions for being subject to alterations, omission, addition, etc to serve an aim intended by the translator or by the different parts at play. It is apparent that translated literature coming from the periphery, mainly written by women, is subject to appropriation and dominance as it must abide by the canons of the West to gain acceptability and privilege. Therefore, only certain texts are chosen and certain voices are allowed to be heard. Additionally, It could be argued that a colonial perspective still governs the translation activity. It is reflected in the appropriation of the source text and reconstructing it according to the receiving environment norms.

### 2.3 Arab Literature and Western Translation

Despite the radical changes happening in the Arabic and Muslim societies at social, cultural or political levels, they are still viewed and represented in the same way that permeated translation long time ago. Quoting Said, Faiq stated that “Arab culture and Islam, distanced by time, space and language(s) are usually carried over-made to cross over into a Western tradition as an ordinary moment and image within a master narrative of western discourse full of ready-made stereotypes and clichés” (Said, 1997 as cited in Faiq, 2004, p. 8). According to Faiq (2007), Said’s argument is still valid today: The selection of Arab literary works to be translated into English and other Western languages is still made based on the degree of their conformity to the stereotypical image of Arabs and not for their innovative features. From this perspective, Van Leeuwen (2004) contends that such kind of translation "prevented the emergence of an authentic discourse on Arab identity, since the problem of identity was wholly seen through the prism of European conceptions" (p.16).

In the minds of many westerners, the position of the orient, its literature and its culture should be relegated, as the qualities that the Orientalists bestow on themselves are exclusive privileges to them rather than the Orientals. This is reflected in the British historian Thomas Macaulay’s statement, “. . . a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia” (as cited in Momma, 2013, p. 97). The situation is lucid when it comes to the translation of literary works from Arabic into western languages. Lucidly, literature, as a cultural product that reflects a great part of a society’s culture, is highly prone to manipulation, appropriation and commodification in the translation process.

A plethora of Arabic literary works has been dominated, manipulated and appropriated to conform the western ideologies and perpetuate the same atavistic discursive patterns of the west-east dichotomy. According to Faiq (2007), the Arab literary works translated into English by westerners are selected not for their innovative approaches but based on their degree of conformity to the stereotypical images of Arabs already held by the west.

The translator's role is paramount in resisting or perpetuating cultural appropriation, asymmetry and dominance. Gentzler and Tymoczko (2002) avers that the analysis of the translation done by westerners to the non western works labelled the Third World texts reveals flagrant changes happen during the translation process to conform the existing cultural norms of the target environment via the construction of incendiary images of the others' cultures that reinforce the stereotypical images held by the West. Additionally, scrutinizing the translation

practices in the west, it becomes apparent that most, if ever, Arab literary works selected for translation in the west are the ones which perpetuate the same stereotypical images and conform to western ideologies or for being not challenging to the discourse prevalent in the west and that based on othering, Orientals, stifling their heterogeneity, and portraying them as a homogeneous group sharing the same qualities..Axiomatically, not only the West is blamed for the appropriation and commodification of Arabic literature and relegating it to secondary position. The blame is on Arabs writers and translators and publishing houses as well.

First, under the pretext of defending Arab and Muslim women rights, or seeking acceptability and fame internationally, some Arab authors tend to hide their ideologies and alter their identities to defend women rights through the lenses of the West. Thus, many Arab writers write in Arabic but for the foreign reader of their translated works. many Arab writers who seek fame and visibility overseas tend to adapt their works and assimilate to the target environment and abide by the western norms to achieve some level of respect, visibility and advantage.

As stated previously, the western dominance over the translation act is blatant, mainly when the translation is from Arabic into English. In this regard, Ettobi (2008) remarks that translation of Arabic literature into western languages, particularly into English and French, has already been a site for geopolitical conflicts. The East-West geopolitical relations have impacted the dissemination of Arabic literature and obstructed the attempts of its exploration. Indisputably, cultural dominance is flagrant when the translation of Arabic literature is undertaken for the works written by Arab female authors.

## 2.4 Women's Literature and Translation

Clearly, like other literary works, the ones written by women, which often tackle issues facilitating representations about women, are of great interest to the western translators and publishers as they help perpetuating the system of representation of Arab women prevalent in the west. Hence, translated Arab literary works are commodified to become goods used to serve hidden agendas and interests, be they financial, political or social. Within the same vista, works written by women are highly prioritized for the west publishers and translators as they often deal with controversial issues of Arab and Muslim communities such as oppression, abuse, gender inequalities and divulge some of the peculiarities of these "*secretive societies*". In crude terms, the demand for translating and publishing works written by women is greater than to those written by men. According to Venuti (1998), this incremental attention paid to women works is not innocent. Rather, Works of women respond better to issues preferred in the West, like sex, veiling, gendered oppression, etc. and that reinforce pre-existing stereotypical images. Sharing the same view, Fährdrich (2016) avers that "myths, clichés and reproaches readily surface when translation from Arabic into western languages is discussed or when party small-talk centers on this topic" (p.1). Reinforcing the same idea, Edward Said (1995), claimed that Westerners, appropriating the Arabic literature, often do not welcome it in their translations except for texts that "reiterate the usual clichés about 'Islam, violence, sensuality, and so forth' (p. 99). Due to the unequal powers between the translators and authors, Arab women's literary works are often subjected to conspicuous manipulation that alters the aims and the meaning of the source text.

## 2.5 Translation and Manipulation

Manipulation is pervasive in translation. Scholars believe that manipulation of the source text, dictated by the culture of the receiving environment, is inevitable in translation, mainly literary translation, to serve certain interests and aims (Bassnett, 2000; Dukate, 2007; Faiq, 2004, 2008; Farahzad, 1998; Hermans, 1985; Said, 1995; Tymoczko & Gentzler, 2002; Venuti, 1998). In crude terms, faithfulness to the source text is a nonexistent reality. Under this spirit, explaining translation as a manipulative act, A. Ducate avers that the translation of the source text often

"results in the adaptation of the text for the Target Audience, considering the cultural, ideological, linguistic and literary differences between the cultures in contact, which takes place within a particular cultural setting " (Ducate, 2007, p.32). Translators, even if they aim at producing a text that is faithful to the source one and that replicates the source culture embedded in the original text, they find themselves compelled with the requirements of the dominant culture and the expectations of the target audience. Manipulations in translation are the result of some ideological considerations which, according to Lefevere, promote for certain cultures, allow certain works to be translated and disseminated and censor other works through complete rejection of their translation or through manipulating their translations to meet the target environment's requirements. The end product of the latter is a result of deceptive and abusive tactics that tend to make the perception of the Other and its culture conforms to the target readers' expectations, the prevalent discourse of representations, and the pre-established conceptions and existing stereotypes, though the readers are unaware of the fact that they are manipulated as they read altered texts that do not reflect the cultural realities in which they originate. The manipulative acts that often pervade translation, mainly in literary works, reshape the target text and often lead to the alteration of its meaning. In compliance with this, Tymoczko and Gentzler (2002) state: "Translation thus is not simply an act of reproduction but, rather, a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration, and fabrication – and even, in some cases, of falsification, refusal of information, counterfeiting, and the creation of secret codes" (p. xxi). To this end, translation acts and processes need to be scrutinized and every step in the translation process needs to be a subject to contestation mainly when translation is between Arabic and western languages. Certainly, "encounters between Arab culture and the West through translation have been characterised by strategies of manipulation, subversion and appropriation" (Faiq, 2008, p.41). It could be argued that such practices reflect the colonial perspective that still governs the translation activity. It is reflected in reconstructing the translated text according to the receiving environment norms.

### **3. Cultural Dominance**

Cultural dominance is a subcategory of cultural appropriation. According to Richard A. Rogers (2006), it refers to "a unidirectional imposition of elements of dominant culture onto a subordinated (marginalized, colonized) culture" (pp. 474-500). When members of the "subordinated culture" are forced to use certain aspects/elements of the "dominant culture" in specific contexts, the practice of dominance may be identified. Highlighting the limited choices that dominated members of subordinated cultures have, Rogers pointed out that "cultural dominance implies a relative lack of choice about whether or not to appropriate on the part of the "receiving" culture because of the "sending" culture's greater political, cultural, economic, and/or military power" (Rogers, 2006, pp. 474-500). The dominant culture, or as it is referred to as the "culture of power", is the culture that has been able to impose its values, language, and ways of behaving on other cultures. This imposition can be through economic, social, or political powers and that are abetted by religious, educational or other institutions to serve this aim. It should be mentioned that power does not necessarily reside in numerical superiority but in the ability to control those institutions.

Due to dominance, individuals from the receiving cultures may shift their identities. This shift in identity construction encloses a panoply of aspects ranging from alterations in a one's behavior that changes to conform the dominated culture to psychological changes including alterations in individuals' attitudes toward the dominated group and their culture by being more submissive and then assimilation that can result from either coercion or appreciation. In a common parlance, Lin and Luke (2006) aver that "colonization's legacy has become invisible ideological hegemony – domination with consent; that is, the previously colonized peoples still worship the languages, cultures, music, arts, knowledge, pedagogies, or most aspects of



Western life as more advanced, progressive and superior" (p.69). This kind of submissiveness and assimilative acts are a form of colonialism, only the form of colonialism changed. Regarding language, as a cultural product, Phillipson (1992) stated that "periphery countries, deemed as "dominated poor ones", generally endeavour to follow the norms of core English speaking countries including USA and Great Britain" (p. 17).

Incontrovertibly, authors often tend to translate their works into English since it is a global language and that can gain them a wider readership. Unequivocally, the hegemonic use of English as a global language can result in a form of dominance as language and culture go in tandem. Phillipson (1992) believes that the spread of English is not only a vehicle of linguistic domination but for cultural domination as well. Parallel to this, translation that acts to mediate languages and cultures has become a discourse with enormous power that "compares, differentiates, hierarchies, homogenizes, excludes" (Foucault, 1979, p. 183). Succinctly put, translation has become a tool for cultural dominance.

### **3.1 Translation and Cultural Dominance**

Casting any doubt, translation is shaped by the power relations and the different facets of this power. As observed, in many parts of the world, the West still dominates the East economically, politically and culturally, and translation is no more than an a tool or an amplifier of this dominance. Jacquemond (1992) avers that power in its different manifestations: cultural, economic, and political resides largely in the Northern hemisphere. Parallel to this, Yajima and Toyosaki (2015) argues, "global translation behaves as the very lubricant for the circulation of power by making particular information available in particular ways to particular people in the world" (p.94). Some scholars view that this is another form of colonialism since the latter is not exercised by military forces solely. Rather, even knowledge is a tool with enormous power that can perform the same role, albeit differently and to a varying degree. Under this spirit Tymoczko, (2000) writes:

Colonialism and imperialism were and are made possible not just by military might or economic advantage but by Knowledge as well ... translation has been a key tool in the production of such knowledge and representations ... translation can be used by colonizers as a kind of intelligence operation to interrogate subjects and maintain control." (p. 294)

In crude terms, the role of translation is undeniable. Through manipulation, it has the power to create knowledge, shape knowledge even deceptive knowledge, and shape cultures through representations and deforming the authentic image of the Other and its culture or creating incendiary image about the Other. The cultural dominance acts in translation are the result of the interconnectedness of the latter with politics. Clearly, as Ahmed (2019) postulates, "translation can be a politically-driven process i.e. politics can direct the selection of certain works to be translated into English, for instance, and how the Arabs are represented in these texts, to serve imperial interests" (p.388).

To this end, it could be argued that (literary) translation faithfulness is a nonexistent reality since it depends largely on myriad of factors including the translator's subjectivity and ideology, the external factors, be they cultural, political or historical. These factors are determining in the choice of the strategy and, hence, in the quality of the end product. The translator either keeps the linguistic and cultural features embedded in the source text during translation and then imparting them to the target environment (foreignization) or substitutes them by the ones of the receiving culture to conform the readers' expectations and gain wider readership (domestication). In this vein, the translation's role is of a paramount importance in choosing the appropriate strategy depending on the purpose of the translation. Domestication, as a translation strategy, is often seen as a way to subsidize the western cultural dominance to foreground the western cultures and background other cultures. Venuti in his work, *The Scandals of*

Translation (1998), identified two main strategies of translation. The choice of these strategies is guided by the of the translator or the publisher or the intended goals of the translation act.

Domestication intends to curtail the foreignness of the text to and minimize its strangeness for the readers in the target culture environment whereas foreignization maintains the foreignness of the source text during translation. Domestication strategy assimilates the source text to the target linguistic and cultural context. For Venuti, who favours foreignization, the seamy side of the domesticating strategy is that the end product of the translation based on such strategy loses its uniqueness and foreignness and it is a product of the receiving community's ideologies, values and norms rather than echoing the ones of the original context. Translators who adopt such strategy often recourse to adjustments, omissions and additions to meet the target environment's readers expectations and tastes and to serve the intended goals of the translation act. Venuti (1998) believes that domestication is an attempt to silence the voice of the Other and to allow the dissemination of certain cultures rather than others. Ergo, Venuti recommends a foreignization strategy to sound the silence of the dominated cultures, promote for cultures coming from the periphery, from the margin to the center. He explains that domestication as a strategy that dominates translation (mainly in the United Kingdom and the United States) indicates the asymmetry of power relations between the more and the less powerful (Venuti, 1998). Within the same vista, Faiq (2007) contends that texts are often domesticated to conform to established system of representation of Arabs and their culture.

Lawrence Venuti, who supports foreignization in translation as a strategy that resists the Anglo-American tendency to domestication that subsidizes hegemony, argues that "the power of translation to (re)constitute and cheapen foreign texts, to trivialize and exclude foreign cultures, and thus potentially to figure in racial discrimination and ethnic violence, international political confrontations, terrorism, war" (Venuti 1993, p.35). The different modifications and alterations of the source text to meet the system of representations in the target environment and to gain a wider readership is described by Venuti as violence of translation. This is generally subsidized by a domestication strategy that works for "the reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs and representations that pre-exist it in the target language, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the production, circulation, and reception of texts." ( Venuti, 1993, p .36). Within this regard, Venuti argues that translation is an activity that domestication is its hallmark where the dominating west imposes its canons on the translation activity to serve its hegemonic purposes.

In contrast to domestication, foreignization is a strategy in translation that retains the flavour and peculiarities of the source text. This strategy is seen as a way to accept and tolerate difference and foster cultural exchange through translation and to offer the target reader the possibility to view the world from a different perspective. Ricoeur (2006) reckons that translation should be seen as another way for the hospitality of the Other. He argues that translation is "linguistic hospitality ... where the pleasure of dwelling in the other's language is balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home, in one's own welcoming house" (as cited in Ajtony, 2015, p. 94). The translation strategy chosen by the translator has a major role in reconciliation of difference and either the exclusion or inclusion of the other.

Venuti (1995) views that foreignization is a strategy of resistant translation to the hegemony and dominant cultures. He favours foreignization which, in his view, challenges the prevailing hegemonic discourse that aims at suffocating the heterogeneity of the foreign cultures. Venuti (1995) explains that "foreignization translation in English can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations." (p. 20). The foreignization strategy, in Venuti's view, abets the target readers to view the world from a different perspective while they read texts full of the foreign culture peculiarities that are different from the ones prevalent in their home communities. For

the proponents of foreignization, a good translation is the one that accounts for all the cultural, social, historical and political factors while translating the source text into the target language without altering the contextual nuances.

Lawrence Venuti views that England and America tend to use domestication strategy rather than foreignization as an attempt to distance the other. In Venuti's view, this is a natural outcome of the hegemonic position of English in the world. He avers that translation is an activity for power hierarchies and competitions and hence a domestication strategy is a sign of dominance. Tymoczko (2000) stresses that "the textual and cultural deformation of translated texts is not the result of particular translation strategies, but rather of cultural dominance itself" (p. 35). This goes in parallel with Venuti's view that captures the violence of translation that resides in the alterations made in the translated texts to maintain the hegemony of the Anglo-American cultures and maintain social hierarchies and power inequalities.

Nevertheless, though Venuti favours foreignization and believes that it is a resistant translation, he explains that domestication and foreignization are two heuristic terms rather than oppositional ones. The violence in the translation does not reside in the strategy per se, but in the ethical consideration and the aims behind these choices that aim at sounding some voices and silencing others, disseminating and foregrounding some cultures and relegating others. In a common parlance, Jianghua (2006) argued that the presence of one strategy does not occlude the operation of the other. He contends that "domestication and foreignization are supplemented to each other rather than a pair of conflict. We cannot discard either absolutely" (p. 59). This view implies that the two strategies are complementary rather than incongruent. Under this spirit, one can say that the onus is on the translator who must feel the responsibility towards the source text, to retain its separate nature, its uniqueness, its culture while disseminating it within the target context.

#### **4. Method**

This study peruses the different manipulative tactics and strategies practised by translators during the translation process. Through analysing a number of instances written by Arab female novelists and translated into English and comparing them to the original ones, the study highlights how western dominance still pervades translation of Arab female literary works and pinpoints the extent to which translation from the periphery into western languages can "masquerade as an 'innocent' activity" (Fawcett, 1995, p.117). Yet, in reality it is a site for different power manifestations and a tool for cultural hegemony and dominance. Through the analysis of different novels written by Arab female authors from different Arab countries such as Samar Yazbek (Syria), Nawal El-Saadawi (Egypt), Huda Sha'rawi (Egypt) and Ahlem Mosteghanmi (Algeria) translated into English, the dominance of western translators becomes apparent and "the violence of translation", to use Venuti's term, is lucid through different manipulative tactics that resulted in blatant alterations of the meaning of the source text.

It should not be left unnoticed that the present research is descriptive and analytical. Gil (2008) explains that descriptive researches are usually used for the aim of demonstrating a population characteristics, investigating a phenomenon, a problem, experience, or establishing relations among different variables. Moreover, the analytical approach is adopted as "the researcher has to use facts or information already available, and analyze these to make a critical evaluation of the material" (Kothari, 2009, p.3). Description, in this article, is used mainly for tackling the major turns in translation studies to discern the move of translation from linguistic activity to a site of power and ideological struggles. The analysis is used in comparing the content of the source texts with the English translations to highlight the politics of dominance in translation and to depict authors' assimilation, whether wittingly or inadvertently, and the absence of resistance to such dominance.

## 5. Instances

Dominance of translated works to conform the western norms is adeptly summarised in Bassnett and Trivedi's comment as they pointed out, "we are still living in a colonising world...with clear asymmetrical power relations between the coloniser and its dominant language and the local colonised and its marginal or less dominant language. Only the form and shape of colonisation have changed" (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999). Yet, the blame is not only on the West. Rather, being submissive, to a great or little extent, to the western canons and norms of translation, Arab writers contribute to the appropriation and manipulation of their works as they lacked agency and showed either little or no resistance to the western translators to meet the foreign readers' expectations and tastes, they often mask or alter their ideologies and identities and follow the system of the receiving environment. The situation can be visualised through analysing a number of instances of novels written by Arab female Authors and translated into English.

### 5.1 The Hidden Face of Eve (Nawal El-Saadawi)

Undeniably, the translated works of Nawal El-Saadawi are quite popular in U.S.A. and Britain. However, their translation was subject to western dominance and flagrant manipulation of the source text. In *Al-Wajh al-'Ari lil-Mar'ah al-Arabiyyah* (1977) which literally means "*The Naked Face of the Arab Woman*", translated into English by Sherif Hatata, the Arab woman is badly portrayed and the western translation dominance reflected in the various manipulative tactics is flagrant. A domestication strategy is prevalent to make alterations of the source text and to deprive it from its meaning. Methods like omission and addition to render the text replicating the norms of the receiving culture and to meet the tastes and the expectations of the target reader and to reinforce the previously constructed images and stereotypes are employed. In this regard, Benmessaoud (2015) highlights that "the discursive strategies adopted in the translation of *al-Wajh al-'Ari lil-Mar'ah al-Arabiyyah* (1977), along with the reception of this translation, have both subverted the text to serve the ideological needs of the period (p.75). El-Saadawi, In her work, criticizes the situation of Arab woman in their countries. The writer explains that Islam bestowed on women full rights to live in dignity next to men but these rights are violated by the hegemonic patriarchal systems of their countries. El-Saadawi, through her writings, urged Arab women to claim and ask for these rights back. In the preface to the British translation of this work, El-Saadawi glorified the Islamic revolution in Iran and portrayed it clearly as a victory against Western imperialism. However, this preface was omitted from the American edition. The latter witnessed flagrant intervention and manipulation.

To visualise the dominance of the translators and their massive interventions in the source text, myriad of points have to be highlighted. Amireh (2000) contends that The English translation of the work that was undertaken by the authors's husband, Sherif Hatata, was a subject to extreme interventions whether at the level of the paratext or other textual alterations. To illustrate, the title of the source text was initially "*The Naked Face of the Arab Woman*". However, the English translation appeared with the title "*The Hidden Face of the Eve: Women in the Arab world*", that is literally opposite in meaning to the original one with a picture portraying woman with a veil. The latter, undeniably, as Golley (2003) highlights, has "always been associated with Arab women and especially with their oppression" (p.18) and conforms to the system of representation of Arab woman in the west.

The dominance of translation over this work is blatant without resistance from the author, whether wittingly or inadvertently, to keep the meaning and aim of her text. In this regard, Amireh (2000) argues that El-Saadawi, through the translation of her works, was "not always in control of either her voice or her image" (p. 219). Moreover, in her work, under a chapter entitled, '*Positive Sources for Arab Woman*', El-Saadawi talked about the Arab woman's



resistance to the patriarchal system four centuries ago and supported Islam and the Iranian revolution of the late 1970s as well. Yet, these parts were omitted wholly. It should not be left unnoticed that the parts were in the first edition of the translated version, but due to the criticism the book met in the West, they were omitted in the new edition.

Equally important, chapters organization was subject to flagrant manipulation. The translator deleted an entire chapter and inserted a new one in the English edition. The chapter was deleted since the author criticized severely capitalism that, in her view, exploited women, and praised socialism in contrast to that. Additionally, as Amireh (2000) highlights, the first section of the translated work appeared with the title, "the mutilated half," an addition that did not exist in the original. The translated work witnessed an insertion of new chapter entitled '*The Grandfather with the Bad Manners*' in order to portray and reproduce a bad image of sexual badgering to a five-year old girl by a bad grandfather.

In addition to the aforementioned interventions, the translated version has stimulated due attention for other flagrant changes in the source text. Under the title "Circumcision of Girls", a new chapter was added to the work in the English translation. Benmessaoud, referring to El Saadawi and the translation of her works, states:

Her voice as a political dissident and feminist activist was equally muted and indeed domesticated to become yet another voice that falls in line with what Jauss (1970, p. 12) terms the readers' "horizon of expectations," thus confirming existing preconceptions and feeding the currently hegemonic perception of the Arab woman. (Benmessaoud, 2015, p. 76)

Undeniably, such intervention through addition, omission or change aimed at maintaining the stereotypical image of Arab and Muslim societies in the mindset of the West and even to increase hatred against the Arabs by portraying them through defamatory images and ascribing to them one static identity. The work is dominated, exploited, appropriated and commodified as it was tailored to serve the hidden agendas and to conform to the translator's ideologies and the reader's expectations. Consequently, the translation and publishing of Arabic literary works is often appropriated, modified and commodified through changing the meaning embedded in the source text to reinforce the position of the East as inferior and West as superior.

## 5.2 Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution (Samar Yazbek)

Examining another instance, the novel written by the Syrian female novelist, Samar Yazbek (2011) entitled "*Tqatau' Niran: Min Yawmiyat al-Intifadhah al-Suriyah*" which literally means "*Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution*", dominance over the translation of this work is evident and manipulation of the source text is conspicuous. To illustrate, the title in the English translation includes and starts with the word "woman" which does not exist in the original title of the novel. The original title, as mentioned previously, was "*Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution*". However, the translated version undertaken by Max Weiss and published by Haus Publishing, appeared under the title: "*A Woman in the Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution*" (2012). The word 'woman' is added to the title although the word does not appear in the Arabic title and does not reflect the content of the novel since the woman is not its central issue. This addition appeared because women, Islam and sex in Arab and Muslim communities are at the top of the topics preferred for western publishers and readers. Peter Clark's incident confirms this as he narrates his own experience while attempting to publish some of the Arabic contemporary literature translated into English. In his book *Arabic Literature Unveiled: Challenges of Translation* Clark recounted:

A few years ago I went to work in Syria and I wanted, during my stay there, to translate a volume of contemporary Syrian literature. I read around and thought the work of 'Abd al-Salam al-'Ujaili was very good and well worth putting into English. 'Ujaili is a doctor in his seventies



who has written poetry, criticism, novels and short stories. In particular his short stories are outstanding. Many are located in the Euphrates valley and depict the tensions of individuals coping with the politicization and the omnipotent state. Volumes of his work have been translated into French, Russian and other languages. Two or three short stories have appeared in English anthologies or magazines. I proposed to my British publisher a volume of 'Ujaili's short stories. The editor said, "There are three things wrong with the idea. He's male. He's old and he writes short stories. Can you find a young female novelist?" Well, I looked into women's literature and did translate a novel by a woman writer even though she is in her eighties. (Clark, 2000, p.109)

Clark, commenting on this incident, stated that "commercial calculation gets in the way of the dissemination in English of the best Arabic literature" (Clark, 2000, p. 4). Obviously, of great interest to the western translators and publishers are the literary works that tackle issues about women or written by women as they abet perpetuating the stereotypical images of Arab women prevalent in the west, conform to the western ideologies, and meet the foreign readers' expectations and tastes. Hence, translated Arab literary works are commodified to become goods used to serve hidden agendas and interests, be they financial, political or social and to perpetuate the atavistic discourse of binarism based on the superior *Self* and the inferior *Other* to reinforce the West's dominance and hegemony.

Similarly, for the paratexts, in addition to the changes in the title by adding the word woman, a foreword was added in the English version. More importantly, while the cover of the original work portrays crossing lines as symbols of crossfire with the title of the novel in a red colour on a white background, the cover of the English edition is crowded with details. The front cover of the novel in English is a picture portraying a group of demonstrators raising the flag of the Syrian revolution that is a conspicuous commodification and adaptation of the source depriving it from its meaning and aim to meet a wider readership in the target environment.

### 5.3 The Cry of the Dove (Fadia Faqir)

Surprisingly, even if literary works of Arab writers are originally written in English, they can be subject to adaptation and commodification by the West, mainly in the United Kingdom and the United States. For instance, Fadia Faqir's novel entitled "*My Name is Salma*", which was originally written in English, was translated into 13 languages and was published in 16 countries. In the United States, the novel was published with a different title; "*The Cry of the Dove*", dissimilar to the other versions in 15 countries. Faqir, Commenting on this, pointed out that "she resisted the title change in the beginning and that she had very little authority over the appearance of the book which varied between countries where it was published" (Alzghoul, 2018, p.38). This situation is added to many others that reflect the western dominance over the Arab literary works in general and women literature in particular and that, beyond any shadow of doubt, obstruct the cultural exchange intended from the translation activity.

### 5.4 Memory in the Flesh & The Bridges of Constantine (Ahlem Mosteghanemi)

The Algerian novelist Ahlem Mosteghanemi wrote her novel "*Dhakirat al-Jasad*" (1985) which was later translated into English under the title "*Memory in the Flesh*" (2000 and 2003) and "*The Bridges of Constantine*" (2013). After its winning of Naguib Mahfouz Prize for Literature in 1998, the American University in Cairo Press introduced the translation of *Dhakirat al-Jasad* into English, under a literal translation of the title, *Memory in the Flesh*. That was the first translation of this novel into a foreign language. The translation was done by Baria Ahmar, a Lebanese writer and translator. In 2000, the novel was available for sale but Mosteghanemi was not satisfied with Baria Ahmar's translation of her novel as the sales of the English translation of *Memory in the Flesh* did not reflect the wide readership. Another revised version of translation was undertaken by Peter Clark and was published in 2003. In 2013, Bloomsbury

UK released a new translated version of the novel *Dhakhirat al-Jasad* but under the title *The Bridges of Constantine*. This translation was undertaken by Raphael Cohen.

As for the paratexts, both versions of *Memory in the Flesh* (2000 and 2003) appeared with the same cover of the original novel *Dhakhirat al-Jasad*; a colorful blanket and a candle. However, a new cover; portraying a woman wearing a full veil, appeared with the *Bridges of Constantine* reinforcing a stereotypical image of the oppressed Arab female prevalent in the West. such alterations in the original work are deliberate to gain advantage and acceptability by the target reader. The change of the book cover calls for the same clichés about Arabs and Muslims is amid the various acts that are usually practiced to promote for works from exotic cultures, mainly from the Arab and Muslim communities where women are always represented as subjects to abuse, oppression, violence and gender inequalities, and need to be saved.

### 5.5 Mudhakkirati (My Diaries) or Harem Years (Huda Shaarawi)

The same process happened with Huda Shaarawi's work which witnessed change of the title in the translated edition. The Egyptian pioneer feminist Huda Shaarawi's work in which she recounts her public life as an active feminist was written under the title *Mudhakkirati* which means "My Diaries, 1981". The work was translated into English but appeared with a different title "Harem Years". In her article "Packaging 'Huda': Sha'rawi's Memoires in the United States Reception Environment", Mohja Kahf examines the translation and states that "the translator used a different title on the cover for the translated book to cater for the expectations of the reception environment in terms of presenting the Arab woman as seeking rescue" (Kahf, 2000, p. 148). In her study of Huda Shaarawi's translation, Kahf (2000) identified the dominance acts over the translation and opined that the substitution of the title Harem years to the original title can better demonstrate the extent to which the writer's subjectivity can impact and alter the meaning and aim of the source text to mute the real Arab feminist voice. The title shifts the focus of the diaries that recount the life of an Egyptian figure and a prominent feminist agent to a woman portrayed as subject to oppression, injustice and silence echoing the same images and system of representation in the west to demonstrate the west culture as Superior and the Other's culture as inferior.

More importantly, Shaarawi, in her work, devoted some chapters to recount her life as an active feminist. Again, the translator preferred not translate them and inserted them in no more than an epilogue that summarises the whole events in a handful of sentences. this minimization plays a role in neglecting the dire role of the active feminist that the writer wanted to portray in her original text. The translator's flagrant intervention is evident. Added to what has been stated previously, the organization of the chapters was a subject to change as well. Kahf (2000) remarks that the remaining of the book was divided into four separate chapters that were organized by the translator in relation to the title Harem Years: "The Family," "Childhood in the Harem 1884-92," "A Separate Life 1892-1900" and "A Wife in the Harem 1900-18." In the same line of thought, the opinions of the writer towards a French woman who, in her view, suffered from the lack of sympathy of French people with her and that she was a victim to the exploitation of male of her vulnerability and to that of women in general was completely deleted from the translated edition.

More gravely, the writer, in the Arabic edition informed her readers that the languages she learnt first were Arabic and Turkish then she moved to learn French when was nine years old. However, the translated version portrayed that French was the author's first language. This change, undoubtedly, aimed at foregrounding the western culture giving it much importance compared to the Arabic culture that was backgrounded and relegated to a secondary position to maintain the western cultural hegemony over other cultures.

The blurb of the back cover contained some sentences by Albert Hourani that aim at enhance European cultural influence on the Arabic culture and of the writer's life path in particular. ALbert Hourani writes, "*Harem Years* shows how a gifted and sensitive woman, brought up in seclusion but with a knowledge of French that opened a window onto European culture, gradually became aware of her own predicament and that of her sex and society". Kahf (2000) laments that portraying the life of the writer as a private life of an Arab or Egyptian woman that owes her life to the influence of the European culture instead of a story of a public figure, the translation deprived the text of its meaning.

Such dominance over the translated Arab female writings is, beyond any shadow of doubt, for the aim of maintaining the atavistic discourse of the superior West and the inferior Other. Undeniably, dominance over knowledge in general and translation in particular helps perpetuate the hegemony, imperialism and control over the other where translation is amid the befitting tools that plays a delicate role in the dynamics of those policies.

## 6. Discussion

The analysis of the aforementioned instances elucidates that the translation of Arab literary works, mainly those which are written by women is dominated by the western translators and publishers to make the translated text conform the receiving environment and its system of representations. Such translation abets maintaining the western cultural hegemony over other cultures by backgrounding the cultural peculiarities embedded in the original text and depriving it from its meaning and aim through the different manipulative tactics and alterations. Thus, translation is regarded an activity with a decisive role in devaluing other cultures relegating them to secondary position and commodifying them to serve certain agendas and interests. Translation from this perspective has become an activity with a major role in maintaining or stifling power asymmetries. As seen previously, cultural dominance that aims at foregrounding certain cultures and backgrounding others pervades all the phases of the translation process from the selection of the works to be translated to their publishing and dissemination to the target reader. Additionally, translation strategies are chosen carefully by translators to make the necessary and alterations in every part of the translated novels including the paratexts and the chapters organization and structure.

Equally important, many works that are popular in the Arab world but were not selected for translation by westerners either because they do not promote for the same discursive patterns prevalent in the west about the east or they challenge the system of representation and the discourse of othering that the west created to represent the Other. In this regard, Faiq (2007) contends, "Arabic literary texts are rarely selected for translation for their creative approaches or for their literary poetics: 'rather texts chosen are recognizable as conforming to the master discourse of writing about and representing Arabs, Arab culture and Islam' (p. 17). To cut it short, the works written by Arab female writers and that tackle issues like gender, sex, oppression and Islam are o the top to be selected for translators.

Unequivocally, works written by women are highly prioritized for the west publishers and translators as they often deal with controversial issues of Arab and Muslim communities such as oppression, abuse, gender inequalities and divulge some of the peculiarities of these secretive societies and often help in portraying Arab people as homogeneous who share the same qualities. According to Venuti, this incremental attention paid to women's literature is not innocent. Rather, Works of women respond better to issues preferred in the West, like sex, veiling, gendered oppression, etc. and that reinforce pre existing stereotypical images (Venuti, 1998). Parallel to this, Faiq (2007) avers that the demand for translating and publishing works written by women is greater than to those written by men.

Nevertheless, not only Western translators and publishers are blamed for the dominance over translation to sound the voices of some cultures and silence others. The blame is, for a panoply of reasons, on Arabs writers as well. To illustrate, under the pretext of defending Arab and Muslim women rights and claiming back their rights from the patriarchal systems of their countries, some female authors defend women rights through the lenses of the West. Additionally, seeking acceptability and fame internationally, Arab women writers often tend to hide their ideologies and alter their identities and write in Arabic but for the target reader instead for readers from their countries or for general readers. Moreover, dominance over the translation of literary works reflected in the different alterations and depriving the source text of its meaning is often faced with no or little resistance from original authors to keep the dissemination of their cultures to the rest of the world. Ergo, a great onus is on Arab writers in general and female writers in particular to establish agency over the translation of their works and to be competent translators to undertake the task of translating their literature themselves rather than depending on the western norms to resist the cultural dominance of the western translators and to promote for their cultures globally as they are embedded in their original works and as they intended to do. Writing and translation, if taken from this perspective, would play a great role to cease, or at least mitigate, cultural dominance over the translation of literary works which have often been released as "Arab literature but in conformity to western norms, aims and expectations".

Time and again, Arab authors in general and female writers in particular to be aware of the fact that translation, nowadays, transcends the innocent role of cultural and linguistic mediation to become a site of power manifestation and ideological competitions with a major role in sounding certain voices and silencing others. To this end, it is advisable, if not imperative, to adopt a postcolonial resistant approach that should govern both literary writing and translation.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This research aimed at highlighting the western cultural dominance that governs Arabic literary translation in general and women literature in particular. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the politics of cultural dominance in a number of instances of Arab female literary works written by different authors from different Arab countries and to compare the original texts to the ones translated into English. Yet, it should not be left unnoticed that addressing the issue of cultural dominance in the translation of Arabic novel written by women in a single research paper is a challenge due to the entangled nature and the varying manifestations that characterise the debated phenomenon. Moreover, the study was confined to some instances as it is difficult to tackle the debated issue in a great number of literary works in a limited number of pages.

Nevertheless, though the present study offered an insightful investigation of cultural dominance in the translation of Arabic female literature into English, it does not preclude that it could be subject to criticism as it could exhibit some of the shortcomings. Ergo, the researcher believes that more research work in the debated field would be befitting to open up new avenues and to know the different challenges that face the translation and dissemination of Arabic literature and Arabic literature across the world.

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