

Exploring the Strategies of Domestication and Foreignization in the Translation of Socio-Cultural Aspects in Mosteghanemi's Novel *Chaos of the Senses*

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Abstract—Translating literary text under any genre often presents unique challenges for translators, as literature is rich with socio-cultural aspects. This difficulty arises from the need to communicate not only the literal meaning of words but also the cultural significance inherent in the original text. Culture significantly influences the formation of both the original and translated texts, as language is considered a reflection of society and derived from culture. When dealing with the socio-cultural aspects in *Chaos of the Senses*, written by the Algerian writer Ahlam Mosteghanemi, with its two translations, the socio-cultural aspects require a careful balancing act between the fidelity to the original text and the accessibility for the new readers. In this context, following L. Venuti's (2008) strategies of domestication and foreignization, the present study aims to explore these strategies in the translation of the socio-cultural aspects in the novel by comparing the original text with its translations. The study also examines whether the translators' background influences their decisions. It aims to create a clear vision of the Arabic and English versions. The findings indicate that, with some variation, both translators employ domestication and foreignization strategies, with a greater focus on foreignization. The translators attempt as much as they can to preserve the cultural nuances in the translation versions.

Index Terms—domestication and foreignization strategies, socio-cultural aspects, *Chaos of the Senses*

I. INTRODUCTION

A crucial aspect of human communication is the interplay between language, culture, and translation, as language is intricately connected to culture and serves as both a component of culture and a means of communication. Scholars often regard culture as a complex and contentious notion. Culture refers to the set of conventions, beliefs, values, and practices that establish the distinctive way of life within a society. Additionally, language, physical objects, customs, and shared emotional and mental frameworks are all components of culture (McQuilkin, 1980). Translation, on the other hand, is an intricate and astonishing process that requires making several decisions to reduce the risk of committing errors. Among the main challenges faced by the translator is the difficulty of translating socio-cultural aspects. Nida (1964) contends that cultural disparities cause more complications for the translator than linguistic structural variations.

In recent decades, scholars and theorists have observed the rise of culture as an influential area in translation studies, showing interest in studying culture and its effect on translation. Munday (2022) asserts that theorists and their proponents have shifted their orientations from the linguistic-oriented approach, which regards translation as a process of transferring textual features at different linguistic levels, towards a cultural-oriented approach that considers translation a product and focuses on how culture influences and shapes translation. Pioneering figures in this domain, Bassnett and Lefevere (1990), in their contribution to *Translation, History, and Culture*, extend their focus beyond language to examine the interplay between language and culture. They introduce the notion of 'cultural turn' in translation studies, viewing translation as a cultural act rather than just a textual one; in other words, translation involves transmitting both the linguistic and sociocultural settings of the text from one language to another (Wendland, 2012). Regardless of the orientation, whether source-oriented or target-oriented, translators should be mindful of cultural nuances during translation. However, such a process may inhibit the translator in their task due to ideological, cultural, and social factors that may, to a certain degree, come into play (Yousef, 2012). The translator's task is made more challenging by all of these considerations, as they must do it faithfully without altering the meaning of the original text. Overall, a cultural-oriented approach in translation studies perceives translation as an organized process of transformation. According to this approach, translation is both an intercultural and an inter-linguistic endeavour.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Translation of Chaos of The Senses*

Ahlam Mosteghanemi, a creative poet and writer from Algeria, authored her Arabic novel *Chaos of the Senses* in (1997). Among her Arab prizes was the "Najib Mahfouz" medal for literature, which she received in (1998). *Chaos of The Senses* "Fawda Al-Hawas" is the title of the second narrative of her trilogy. It is a powerful story of love, identity, and independence. It was first translated by Baria Ahmer (2004), published by the American University in Cairo, and later by Nancy Roberts (2015), published by Bloomsbury Publishing (Cherif, 2016).

B. *Domestication and Foreignization Strategies*

In his book *Invisibility of The Translator*, the American translation scholar Lawrence Venuti (2008) outlines two fundamental translation strategies: domestication and foreignization. These traditions originated with Schleiermacher, a German translation theorist, who first presented two approaches to translation—bringing the reader closer to the text or bringing the author closer to the reader—without using those exact terms. These strategies describe the ability of the translator to reconstruct the text within the textual environment of the target culture and assist translators with culture and language considerations. Domestication aims to make the original text more approachable to target language readers by reducing its foreignness. It seeks to familiarize the target culture with the unusual expressions used in the original text to make the translated text more readable and accessible to the target readers by adapting the text to their cultural and linguistic norms. Foreignization strategy, on the other hand, preserves the exoticism of the source language and culture. Its goal is to maintain all foreign components of the original text, prioritizing them above the cultural values of the target language, therefore reflecting the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text. Accordingly, domestication is a target culture-oriented strategy, while foreignization is a source culture-oriented strategy. Moreover, Venuti emphasizes the role of the translator as an agent who should be aware of translating the source text and its culture without distortion or violence. To preserve the essence of the source language text, he advocates for a foreignization strategy, highlighting that the translator ought to value the source content and avoid domesticating its otherness. He illustrates the translator's role using the concepts of visibility and invisibility. An invisible translator is one who, by emphasizing naturalness and fluency in the target language, makes their work so smooth and transparent that it reads as if the original author wrote it in the target language. Domestication is commonly associated with this approach. In contrast, a translator is visible when their presence is noticeable, typically by retaining the foreign elements and unique cultural markers of the source text. This is often linked to foreignization, where the translator aims to maintain the foreignness of the text intact by conveying cultural differences rather than smoothing them out.

III. METHODOLOGY

The data in the present research consists of selected texts from Mosteghanemi's novel *Chaos of the Senses* in Arabic, which are compared with two translations. The first translation was carried out by B. Ahmer, a Lebanese journalist, translator, and author. The second translation was done by N. Roberts, an American translator of Arabic literature. The study is qualitative and comparative in nature, aiming to compare the original texts with their two translations to examine the translation of socio-cultural aspects of the selected texts according to the strategies of domestication and foreignization and to test the visibility of the translators in their translations. Moreover, the study aims to assess whether the translators' backgrounds—Arabic and English—affect their decisions and to what extent, given that one translator is originally Arab, while the other is English. This will provide a detailed analysis of the socio-cultural aspects of the novel based on Venuti's translation strategies

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Example (1): Original Text

"و هو ما جعل بعض الساعرين يقترح أن يضاف الى العلم الجزائري شعار (الله غالب) أي لا نستطيع شيئا من أجلكم...." ص 133

Translation (1)

"Causing some skeptics to suggest a slogan be added to the Algerian flag: 'God is the victor', meaning we certainly couldn't do anything for you". (p. 76)

Translation (2)

"This had prompted certain sceptics to suggest that we add the phrase *Allahu ghalib*, 'God is victor', to the Algerian flag, meaning, in effect, 'We can't do a thing for you!'" (p. 71)

The Arabic cultural expression "الله غالب" is a religiously loaded phrase that conveys the idea that 'Allah is the ultimate victor'. It is an expression often used in Arabic-speaking and Islamic societies to recognize the supremacy of Allah over everything in existence. In translation (1), the translator effectively conveys the intended meaning of the expression to be translated into English as "God is the victor". Although the translation communicates the core idea, it omits the original Arabic term, which means that the reader might miss the unique socio-cultural and spiritual significance of this expression. In this case, the translator uses domestication strategy by presenting an English equivalent without retaining the Arabic language or context; even though the English expression is accurate, it lacks the cultural and religious nuance that the Arabic expression brings in its original form. This approach makes the text more accessible for English readers and the

translator visible. In translation (2), the original Arabic phrase "الله غالب" is preserved, and an English equivalent, "God is victor" is used for clarification. The translator employs the couplet procedure in translation by keeping both the original term and its translation to preserve the socio-cultural significance of the Arabic expression and make the meaning clear for English readers. In this case, the translator, who is visible, leans toward the foreignization strategy by preserving the cultural value of the term and introducing it to English readers, ensuring that they experience the original resonance of the phrase while still understanding its meaning. Therefore, including Arabic and English terms assist in creating a balance between maintaining cultural authenticity and providing clarity.

Example (2): Original Text

"أما مشواري الثاني، فسيكون لزيارة امي وتوديعها، قبل الذهاب الى الحج"ص123

Translation (1)

"My second visit would be to my mother to bid her farewell before she went off hajj pilgrimage". (p. 70)

Translation (2)

"My only other outing of the week would be to visit my mother to see her off pilgrimage to Mecca". (p. 66)

The Arabic term "الحج" Hajj refers to the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the five pillars of Islam. In Islamic culture, the term "الحج" holds significant religious meaning and context for Muslims. In translation (1), the term is translated as "hajj pilgrimage," explicitly including the word "Hajj." This translation specifies its significance, providing more context than mentioning 'pilgrimage'. This procedure enhances clarity and helps the reader understand the socio-cultural term, which can be seen as an attempt to bridge the cultural gap between Arabic and English. The translation leans towards foreignization, as it retains the name "Hajj" and the translator aims to be visible to her readers by maintaining the foreignness of the original text when translating such a socio-cultural term. Similarly, translation (2) maintains the same spiritual effect by specifying that the pilgrimage is to Mecca. The translator accurately preserves the socio-cultural context and uses the foreignization strategy. In this case, the translator is visible to the English reader by transferring the culturally specific aspects from the original text to the translated version.

Example (3): Original Text

"أجاني بمنطق البسطاء" حتى واحد ما يكره بلادو.... واش تكون قسنطينة بلا قناطرها... ايه لو تنطق هاذ القنطرة يا بنتي...، وصمت فتركته لصمته"ص108.

Translation (1)

"How could anyone hate his own country? What would Constantine be without its arches? If only these arches could talk, my child". He fell silent, and I left him to his silence". (p. 60)

Translation (2)

"He replied "Nobody would ever hate his own town. And what would Constantine be without its bridges? Just imagine if this bridge could speak, he fell silent, and I left him to his thoughts". (p. 58)

The Algerian city of Constantine is characterized by its significant and distinctive bridges, which are key features of its landscape and cultural identity. Translator (1) inadequately translates the term "arches" in her translation as an equivalent to "قناطر". This term does not fully capture or convey the architectural and cultural importance of the bridges of Constantine. By using the term "arches", the translator employs a domestication strategy, opting for a more general term that might be familiar to English readers. This choice makes the translator invisible and the translation more accessible to the target readers. In contrast, translator (2) uses the precise term "bridges" to describe the culturally significant constructions in Constantine. This approach employs the foreignization strategy, preserving the cultural and contextual integrity of the original term. In the present example, the translator's decision makes her more visible, requiring the reader to understand or explore the significance of the bridges in Constantine.

Example (4): Original Text

"راني جبت لك معاي شوية (بسيصة)حمصتها لك البارح...دُرْك ندير لك بيها صحن (طمينة)...غير تاكلها تولي زي الحسان..."ص100

Translation (1)

"I've brought you some basisa I roasted for you yesterday. We can make a plate of tamina, and as soon as you eat it, you will be as healthy as a horse". (p. 55)

Translation (2)

"I brought you some basisa¹ that I made for yesterday. We can get you a bowl of tamina² to go with it. The minute you eat it, you will be strong as a horse!". (p. 53)

In both translations, the translators choose to transliterate "بسيصة" and "طمينة" into English, maintaining the original Arabic terms. Despite the English readers' potential unfamiliarity with Algerian cuisine, this translation preserves the cultural value of the dishes without providing clarifications or modifications. Therefore, the translators employ the foreignization strategy in their translations, prioritizing the socio-cultural essence of the dishes over providing potentially

¹ *Basisa*: a dish made from roasted wheat, chickpeas, fenugreek and lentils with turmeric and cumin, served variously with butter, honey, ground almonds or peanuts, figs or dates.

² *Tamina*: a dish made from a mixture of honey, clarified butter and chickpea flour. The name of the dish is derived from the same root as the Arabic verb *tam'ana*, which means to check on someone or reassure oneself that someone is healthy and safe.

recognizable equivalents. This choice preserves the socio-cultural identity of the dishes, making the translators visible to their readers.

Translator (1) renders the Arabic phrase "تولي زي الحصان" as "you will be as healthy as a horse" replacing it with an English idiom. This translation uses a familiar English idiom to enhance comprehensibility and readability for the readers, employing the domestication strategy in her translation and trying to be invisible. In contrast, translator (2) translates the Arabic phrase as "you will be strong as a horse". By omitting the idiomatic expression, this translation maintains a closer connection to the original text, leaning towards foreignization. This approach minimizes cultural and idiomatic adjustments, making the translator visible to her readers.

Example (5): Original Text

"واصطف على الجانبين نساء في كل زينتهن التقليدية، يضربن على البندير والدفوف" ص 85

Translation (1)

"The women were lined up on both sides in all their traditional clothing, beating the bindirs and tambourines". (p. 46)

Translation (2)

"Women lined up on either side, decked out in their finest traditional garb and beating on ben-idirs and tambourines". (p. 46)

The Arabic term "البندير" refers to a traditional musical instrument from North Africa, commonly used in cultural and ceremonial settings. "الدفوف", are percussion instruments used in various cultural and musical settings. The first translation, the term "البندير" is rendered as 'bindirs', which accurately represents the Arabic meaning of the word. It can be rendered into 'bindir or bendir'³. The Arabic term "الدفوف" is translated appropriately into 'tambourines' a suitable equivalent common in both English and Arabic language cultures. The translator preserves the foreignness of the original terms, making the translator visible and employing the foreignization strategy to retain the Arabic flavor and cultural peculiarity of the instruments. In the second translation, the term "البندير" is rendered as 'ben-idirs', attempting to transliterate the term and bringing it closer to its original form. However, this procedure may cause a potential lack of clarity and decreased efficacy. The Arabic term "الدفوف" is also translated as "tambourines" accurately reflecting the Arabic term. The translator remains visible by maintaining the foreignness of the Arabic term in the translation.

Example (6): Original Text

وقيل ان أوصل، قالت وهي تقاطعني بلهجة لا تخلو من لؤم نسائي: "انت الجارة الجديدة.... " كل يوم عند العازبة عرس!" ص 163

Translation (1)

"Before I could continue, she interrupted me with a vindictive tone. You're the new neighbor. As they say, every day is a wedding day for the single". (p. 95)

Translation (2)

"Before I could finish, she interrupted me cattily, So, you're the new neighbour. Well, every day's a party around here!" (p. 86)

The Arabic statement "كل يوم عند العازبة عرس" is a cultural proverb in Algerian society. It carries distinct cultural significance within the Arabic context, particularly concerning weddings, which are profoundly important occasions characterized by music, food, and social gatherings. In translation (1), the translator preserves the cultural metaphor of the wedding by maintaining the original language, which might seem unfamiliar to non-Arab readers, the translator keeps the cultural nuances of the wedding as a special celebratory event. This approach leans towards foreignization, as the translator retains the foreignness of the original text in introducing Arabic culture to English readers, making the translator visible. In contrast, translation (2) renders the sentence as "every day is a party," simplifying the cultural reference and making it more accessible to English. In Arabic culture, the term 'party' has a somewhat different connotation than a 'wedding' since it does not have the same profound cultural value. The translation shifts towards domestication by substituting "wedding day" with "party." It smooths over the original cultural reference to make the text more accessible, readable, and fluent; as a result, it loses some of the original cultural richness, which makes the translator invisible to her readers.

Example (7): The Original Text

"أجتازُ ساحة الأمير عبد القادر راجلة. بخطى رصينة وداخل ثياب محتشمة. اتعلم المشي داخل هذه العباءة... وهذا الشال الذي يغطي شعري، وكانني لم اخلعهما يوماً". ص 169

Translation (1)

"I crossed the square on foot, with firm steps beneath my modest clothing. I learned how to walk inside that abaya⁴, with a scarf covering my hair, as if I had never taken them off in my life". (p. 98)

Translation (2)

"I crossed Emir Abdelkader Square with a steady gait, walking along in my cloak and long headscarf as though I'd been wearing them all my life". (p. 88)

³ Bendir: a kind of hand-held drum, often made of wood and goatskin, which is traditional to Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

⁴ Abaya: a traditional modest clothing worn by women in the Arab and Islamic cultures to cover the whole body. Often, it could be in black color or any other colors.

In the Arabic text, the term "عباءة" refers to traditional clothing associated with modesty in Arab and Islamic cultures. In the translation (1), the term "عباءة" is transliterated as "abaya", aiming to preserve its cultural distinctiveness for the intended readers. This approach foreignizes the text by presenting a specific cultural garment to English readers. By keeping the term "abaya" untranslated, the translator becomes visible to the readers. In translation (2), the term is translated as "cloak", a more generalized term. A cloak can refer to any elongated, loose outer garment and is not specific to Islamic or Arab culture. This decision generalizes the cultural reference, making the term more accessible to English readers. Consequently, the translator is invisible as the "cloak" aligns with a domestication strategy, aiming to make the text more accessible and understandable.

Example (8): The Original Text

"امي تعيش دائما بين عرسين، او حجّتين، او نذرين. وحيثما حلّت، تعثر على من يوشك ان يزوج قريبا، او من له قريب عاندا نوا من العمرة او الحجّ. او شيخ' يدعوها لـ "وعدة" اول "زردة"! ص 275

Translation (1)

"She had always lived between two weddings, or two vows. Wherever she went, she always stumbled upon somebody preparing for a wedding or someone with a relative who was just returning from the pilgrimage". (p. 161)

Translation (2)

"My mother's whole life was spent between one wedding and the next, one pilgrimage and the next. Wherever she went, she ran into someone who was about to marry off a son or a daughter, someone who had a relative who had just come back from a pilgrimage to Mecca, or some sheikh who would invite her to a celebration of a local saint". (p. 139)

Concerning the terms "وعدة" and "زردة", they are both socio-culturally specific terms rooted in North African traditions, particularly in Algeria. These terms are associated with social and religious gatherings often connected to Sufi rituals and local saints. In translation (1), both cultural terms are omitted from the translated version, resulting in the loss of the cultural significance of these socio-cultural terms. By simplifying the text, the translator employs a domestication strategy that makes her presence invisible to the reader. In Translation (2), the two Arabic terms are generalized into "a celebration of a local saint". This approach makes the content accessible to English readers who are unfamiliar with the Algerian or North African culture. However, it eliminates the distinct religious and community implications of "wa'ada"⁵ and "zarda"⁶. The depth of these terms, alongside their associations with local customs, celebrations, and particular religious activities, is reduced. The translator opts to convey the cultural ritual as a "celebration," a term broadly understood across many cultures; however, it fails to convey the cultural importance of the Arabic terms adequately. This decision also results in a domestication of the translation, making the translator invisible to the English reader. The omission of these cultural terms from both translations leads to a loss of the cultural value inherent in them. The researchers suggest translating the two terms in English into "wa'da" and "zarda" by transliterating them into English, attempting to convey the foreignness of the cultural terms to the English reader. This will maintain their cultural specificity and significance in the Algerian and North African societies.

V. CONCLUSION

After thoroughly analyzing the selected texts and their translations, it is evident that the translators adopt a combination of both domestication and foreignization strategies in their work. The degree to which these strategies are employed varies, reflecting their attempts to balance between maintaining the cultural integrity of the source text and/or making it accessible to the target readers. For instance, in translating specific cultural terms, "wa'da" and "zarda", the two translators favored domestication by generalizing the terms to make them more accessible to the readers. On the other hand, in translations that retained terms like "Hajj" or provided explanations alongside cultural terms, there was a clear effort to foreignize and preserve the unique cultural elements of the original text. Moreover, the translators' cultural backgrounds do not significantly influence their decisions when translating sociocultural aspects. Additionally, the study concludes that both translators use the strategies of domestication and foreignization with a more frequent emphasis on foreignization over domestication to preserve the cultural nuances of the terms during the translation process.

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⁵ *Wa'da*: refers to a local religious feast held in honour of a local Saint or during a religious celebration. It is typically a large gathering where people come together to fulfil a vow and share food and festivities.

⁶ *Zarda*: a communal and religious meal, similar to wa'da, but often more focused on pilgrimage-like events. It is also a religious gathering, a celebration, particularly with Sufi traditions.

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