
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring Power Differentials in Translation: Assessing the Validity of *The Pessoptimist* by Jayyusi and Le Gassick

Dr. Faical Ben Khalifa

Department of English Language & literature, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman

Corresponding Author: Dr. Faical Ben Khalifa, **E-mail:** faical_khalifa@du.edu.om

ABSTRACT

This article delves into the intricate realm of literary translation through a thorough qualitative evaluation of Jayyusi and Le Gassick's rendition of Emile Habibi's novel, *The Secret Life of Saeed The Pessoptimist*. Given the novel's 'subaltern' nature, deeply entrenched in indigenous language and culture, the study aims to scrutinize the translation's validity through the lens of postcolonial translation theory, as represented by Lawrence Venuti's foreignizing perspective. Central to this scrutiny is the investigation of the translation's impact on the novel's linguistic, semantic, and cultural texture. Employing Antoine Berman's 'système de déformation des textes', known as negative analytic, the analysis unveils pervasive deforming tendencies, underscoring the extensive domestication and alteration to which the novel was subjected. This exploratory investigation contributes to the ongoing discourse in postcolonial studies, highlighting that translation serves as a fertile ground for both subversion and manipulation, especially when applied to narratives believed as belonging to subordinate cultures.

KEYWORDS

Foreignization, domestication, literary translation, Pessoptimist, postcolonial translation, subaltern.

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1. Introduction

The time when translation was perceived as a mere linguistic transfer, primarily focusing on isolated language segments such as words, phrases, sentences, or even entire texts divorced of their cultural milieu, is long gone (Bassnett, 2013; Hatim & Munday, 2019; House, 2015). The intricate relationship between language and culture is irrefutable. Highlighting this inextricable relationship, Nida argues that "[L]anguage and culture cannot exist without each other, and languages not only represent elements of culture, they also serve to model culture" (1998, p. 29). Speaking about her experience with language, the British translation theorist and scholar of comparative literature, Susan Bassnett highlights that "Try as I may, I cannot take language out of culture or culture out of language" (1998, p. 81). Snell-Hornby similarly contends that "the act of translating is no longer simply transcoding from one context into another, but an act of communication. Texts are part of the worlds they inhabit and cannot neatly be ripped from their surroundings" (1990, pp. 81–82). Translation is a cross-cultural transfer and, therefore embodies both bi-cultural and bi-lingual dimensions (Federici & Fortunati, 2017). Given the inextricable connection between language and culture, Venuti (1995) advocates for a translator-centered translation, highlighting that translators should not only be visible but also clearly inscribe themselves into the text. He argues that the reader should be sent abroad rather than bringing the author back home (ibid.).

However, instead of serving as an arena for enriching cultural exchanges, translation is argued to be a ground for manipulation, subverting linguistic and cultural traditions, particularly those from perceived subordinate cultures (Bhabha, 1994; Nirangina, 1992; Shamma, 2018; Spivak, 1987; Venuti, 2008). The encounter of Arabic and English is a case in point, where novels originally penned in Arabic are oftentimes made to conform to prevailing Western systems (Beaugrande 2005). 'Al-Waqa'i al ghareeba fi khtifa Sa'eed Abi an-Nahs al-Motashaa'il', authored by the Palestinian Israeli Emile Habibi and co-translated into English by the Arab American Salam Jayyusi and the Middle East scholar Le Gassick as *The Secret Life of Saeed The Ill-fated Pessoptimist*, is deemed

untranslatable due to its deep-seated and multi-layered indigenusness. It is deemed that in order to preserve the novel's indigenusness, a foreignizing approach needs to be employed in translation.

This paper aims to investigate the translation's validity from a foreignizing perspective, posing the question: to what extent does Jayyusi and Le Gassick's rendition of *The Pessoptimist* align with Venuti's foreignizing approach, capturing the rich linguistic, semantic and cultural nuances inherent in the original masterpiece?

2. Literature review

The post-colonial perspective on translation, having emerged from the intersection of "anthropology, ethnography and colonial history" (Baker, 2008, p. 203, citing Robinson 1997, p. 1) and being influenced by post-structuralist theories, represents a transformative paradigm. It challenges the conventional view of translation as a mere philological transfer between two linguistic codes. It instead positions translation as an intricate cultural artifact that is embedded in the complex dynamic of power and politics (Gal, 2015). The primary aim of the postcolonial translation studies is to unveil the power imbalances inherent in the act of translating, championing a demystifying, visible and minoritizing approach to the translation enterprise (Bandia, p. 2012). Proponents contend that translation should reflect the diverse indigenus cultural mosaic inherent in the literary work, since translation is supposedly shaped by difference (Trivedi, 2007; Venuti, 1998).

Being a primary tool for making sense of the Other, translation is intricately embedded in representation. This representation, being a double-edged sword, fuelled postcolonial translation scholars to embark on a mission to expose the controversies within the translation sphere. Toury (1995) argues that when two cultures with significant power differentials meet, translation being one layer of the cultural poly-system, becomes a battleground for negotiating power dynamics. In the context of the Arab world, Jacquemond's comment that the Arabian Nights "has undoubtedly been the main literary source of French representations of the Arab world, in both their negative (the "barbarian" Orient) and positive (the "magical" Orient)" elucidates the profound impact of translations (1992, pp.150-151, cited in Baker 2008, p. 201). According to Tymoczko (1999), translational norms, once established, notably under the orientalist tradition, tend to go invisible, leading the reader to unwittingly take translations and representations for granted.

A central concern for postcolonial theorists centres on how translation can redress the long-standing imbalance favouring the colonizer (Hassan, 2014; Venuti, 1998). The question remains as to how translators can be persuaded to adopt an alternative path, departing from the inclination to domesticate the foreign in full alignment with Western paradigms and poetics. In a cosmopolitan world coloured by multilingualism and multiculturalism, the argument posits that translators and publishers should shy away from traditionalist dogmas. To acknowledge the kaleidoscopic reality inherent in cross-cultural transactions, linguistic and cultural diversity should be accommodated, nurtured and reflected in translation (Tymoczko, 2014). The contemporary discourse on literary translation has actively explored these issues, grappling with the challenges of rendering literary works through the nuanced strategies of foreignization and domestication. Moreover, the role of the translator as a mediator or writer is discussed in light of the ethical responsibility to maintain faithfulness to the source while ensuring reader accessibility.

3. Overview of Lawrence Venuti's perspective

Venuti (2008) criticizes the current translation enterprise, deeming it scandalous and in need of change. He argues that translation can be meaningful if it enhances the visibility of translation and the translator. This visibility can be achieved through what he termed a foreignizing translation—one that disrupts the dominance of English as a foreign language. He advocates for the exploitation of the multiplicity of Anglo-American English so as to "conquer the major language in order to delineate in it as yet unknown minor languages" (Venuti 1998, p. 11, citing Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 105). According to Venuti, a good translation is one that is both demystifying, i.e. one that "manifests in its own language the foreignness of the foreign text" (1998, p. 11) and minoritizing, that is "it releases the remainder by cultivating a heterogeneous discourse, opening up the standard dialect and literary canons to what is foreign to themselves, to the substandard and the marginal" (ibid.). Venuti views foreignization as a strategic cultural intervention to combat ethnocentrism, racism, imperialism and cultural narcissism, with the aim of embracing a new ethics of cultural difference.

Venuti (2008) emphasizes the pivotal role of foreignization in translation as an approach to preserve the authenticity and cultural depth of the source text. He underscores that this approach warrants the preservation of linguistic nuances and cultural indigenusness (1998). Similarly, Bassnett (1998) contends that foreignization respects the exotic richness of the source text while allowing the reader to experience the unfamiliar cultural indigenusness, fostering a deeper understanding of the Other. Venuti (2008) adds that through foreignization translators can enrich the global literary debate, allowing readers to engage with linguistic diversity and unique narrative traditions from different cultures.

On the other hand, Venuti argues that domestication, or the assimilationist approach, entails two main aspects. The first is "an illusionist effect of discourse" (2008, p. 1), which masquerades the true foreign identity of the original and turns the translator into a mere shadow of themselves. The second relates to how the translation is received and read, in that a translation is often accepted

if found smooth and transparent, devoid of linguistic and stylistic peculiarities. Venuti asserts that the critical lexicon used by literary reviewers and critics has since WW II been intoxicated by such words as "crisp," "elegant," "flows gracefully," "wooden," "seamlessly," "fluid," and "clunky" (Venuti 2008, p. 4). Yet the lack of fluency is often rejected using terms like "translatese," "translationese," or "translatorese" (ibid.). Where domestication employs strategies such as limited or absolute universalisation, naturalisation, synonymy and deletions, foreignization strategies resort to orthographic adaptation, through-translation, intra- and extra-textual goals, transference and pre-established translation.

4. Overview of Antoine Berman's negative analytic

Although Berman, the French translator and theorist, may not have received as much acclaim as Venuti, he is undoubtedly the pioneer behind the contemporary foreignizing movement. In his "L'épreuve de l'étranger," Berman lamented the prevailing tendency among translators to negate the foreign through the 'naturalization' strategy. He clearly articulated that "[T]he properly ethical aim of the translating act is receiving the foreign as foreign" (Munday, 2001, p. 149, citing Berman, 2000, p. 285). Berman views translators as oftentimes unwittingly manipulated by ethnocentric forces, compelling them to ignore the call of the foreign. He believes that awareness of these forces is crucial for neutralizing and overcoming them. According to Berman, translations are frequently marked by a system of textual deformation that overshadows the foreign. He terms this deformation as 'negative analytic,' wherein he identifies twelve deforming tendencies, as illustrated in the table below. The 'negative analytic' primarily targets "ethnocentric, annexationist translations, and hypertextual translations (pastiche, imitation, adaptation, free writing), where the play of deforming forces is freely exercised" (Munday, 2001, p. 149, citing Berman, 2000, p. 286). Berman observes that translations of literary works often tend to diminish variation, emphasizing that "[T]he principal problem of translating the novel is to respect its shapeless polylog and avoid an arbitrary homogenization" (Berman, 2000, p. 287).

Table 1 Berman's (1995) 'système de déformation des textes' or negative analytic

Deforming Tendencies	Definitions
i. <i>Rationalization</i>	Removal of textual complexity, resulting in a more streamlined version of the source (Eccleshall, 2019, p.273)
ii. <i>Clarification</i>	Mak[ing] definite in the target what was imprecise in the source (Eccleshall, 2019, p.275)
iii. <i>Expansion</i>	"unfolding of what, in the original, is folded" (Berman, 1995, p.290)
iv. <i>Ennoblement</i>	The act of rhetorification, i.e. removal of clumsiness or banality in favour of a more stylish language (Berman, 1995, p.290)
v. <i>Qualitative impoverishment</i>	Loss of lexical associations between the word and its sound (Berman, 1995, p.291).
vi. <i>Quantitative impoverishment</i>	Lexical loss in relation to signification networks (Berman, 1995, p.291)
vii. <i>Destruction of rhythms</i>	Overlooking of rhythmic structures in the original text.
viii. <i>Destruction of Underlying Networks of Signification</i>	Destruction of words and phrases that keep recurring and echoing
ix. <i>Destruction of linguistic patternings</i>	Deliberate removal of arrhythmic patterns or jarring linguistic juxtapositions (Berman, 1995, p.287)
x. <i>Destruction of vernacular networks or their Exoticization</i>	Destruction of local vernacular language in the target text.
xi. <i>Destruction of Expressions or Idioms</i>	Destruction of sayings and proverbs that may have non-literal counterparts in the TT (Berman, 1995, p.290).
xii. <i>Effacement of the Superimposition of Languages</i>	Effacing the overlay of two languages in present in the original text.

5. Methodology

This study aims to scrutinize Jayyusi and Le Gassick's rendition of Emil Habibi's *The Pessoptimist* through the lens of foreignization, employing Berman's (1995) analytical model known as negative analytic. The research objectives that guide this analysis are to identify the extent of foreignization in the translation, investigate the impact of the deforming tendencies on the linguistic richness and cultural nuances, and the implications of the translation on the semantic, stylistic and rhythmic integrity of the literary work.

Berman’s negative analytic is chosen for its in-depth approach in spotting and examining deviations from the original text, especially in literary translations. Berman’s model provides a nuanced view of the quality of translation through the systematic examination of linguistic, stylistic and cultural nuances. This makes the model particularly suitable for analyzing such indigenous masterpiece as *The Pessoptimist*.

The methodological approach entails several steps to ensure a structured and systematic investigation into the extent of foreignization in the translated work. First, *The Pessoptimist* was chosen for analysis due to its intricate syntactic, semantic and even phonetic layers. A detailed comparative intertextual analysis method was then utilized, involving close reading and understanding of the source and target texts to identify the various nuances. Berman’s negative analytic was employed to identify and evaluate recurrent tendencies in the translation. Representative examples of the most recurrent tendencies were identified and meticulously compared with their translated counterparts. A literal translation was provided to ensure the reader is able to comprehend the degree of discrepancy between the source and target texts.

It is worth acknowledging the potential limitations that this methodology may entail, including the possibility of personal bias during comparison and interpretation. To mitigate these limitations, two procedures were heeded. First, the total adherence to Berman’s negative analytic as an analyzing framework. Second, the independent verification of findings by two colleagues specialized in translation studies. Overall, the analysis of *The Pessoptimist* unearths the degree of deforming tendencies that impacted the quality of the translation from a postcolonial foreignizing perspective. By exposing these tendencies and their implications, this study contributes to the enhancement of our understanding of the domestication strategies to which the literary texts are subjected and the subsequent erosion of their indigenous essence, rendering the translated texts mere shadows of their originals.

6. Findings and discussion

The qualitative evaluation of Jayyusi and Le Gassick’s rendition of *The Pessoptimist* explored the manifestation of Berman’s 12 deforming tendencies, revealing a notable presence of seven of these tendencies in the translation. Given the qualitative nature of this inquiry, the findings and discussion are integrated into a single section, allowing for a thorough analysis of the deviations identified in the translation. To facilitate the reader’s comprehension of the nuances, the original Arabic text is juxtaposed with its literal English translation, followed by the rendition of Jayyusi and Le Gassick.

6.1 Ennoblement

Ennoblement, or the act of rhetorification, that is, the intentional removal of clumsiness or banality in favour of a more stylish language (Berman, 1995, p. 290) emerges as a recurrent tendency in the translation. It is first encountered in the title of the novel—a title intended to be utterly unconventional. Jayyusi’s translation of the title is a clear case of ennoblement, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 2 Instance of ennoblement in Jayyusi and Le Gassick’s translation

Text Type	Text	Source
Source text	الوقائع الغريبة في اختفاء سعيد أبي النحس المتشائل	Habibi 1974
Literal translation	The peculiar <i>happenings</i> in the <i>disappearance</i> of Saeed abi an-Nahs the Pessoptimist	Author’s translation
Target Text	The <i>Secret Life</i> of <i>Saeed</i> , The <i>Ill-Fated</i> Pessoptimist: A Palestinian who became a Citizen of Israel	Jayyusi 1989

A comparative analysis between the original and translated titles reveals linguistic, stylistic and semantic alterations. As to the linguistic changes, it is noticed that the plural word “happenings” in the original is replaced with a singular word, “life,” in the translation, with the adjective “peculiar” in “peculiar happenings” replaced with its counterpart “secret” in “secret life”. Stylistically, where the original title employs a more descriptive style that stresses the peculiar events surrounding the disappearance of Saeed abi an-Nahs, the translation opts for a more mysterious and captivating style with the addition of “secret life,” suggesting a hidden life full of secrecy and enigma.

Semantically, the original title focuses on the disappearance of Saeed abi an-Nahs, highlighting the novel’s thematic concern with Saeed’s disappearance in the midst of unusual circumstances. The translation, however, shifts focus to the “secret life” of Saeed, suggesting a broader concern with his life which is engulfed with secrecy, rather than a clear focus on his disappearance and the enigma surrounding it. Moreover, the translation of Saeed’s surname, “abi an-Nahs” to its immediate semantic translation, “ill-fated” caused the novel to lose its oxymoron, intended in juxtaposing the name “Saeed”, meaning happiness, with his surname

“abi an-nahs”, meaning jinxed or luckless. This oxymoron encapsulates the essence of the novel, epitomized in the portmanteau “pessoptimist”, a fusion of “optimist” and “pessimist” that embodies the ironic contradictions within the protagonist’s life.

The act of ennoblement served to obscure Habibi’s intended meaning, ensuring that the translation was more palatable and accessible to Western readers, potentially due to the pressures of commercial and cultural constraints (Dunne, 2012). The alterations introduced to the original title of Habibi’s novel have undoubtedly contributed to reshaping the presentation, focus and initial impressions conveyed to the reader by the new title.

Another instance of ennoblement goes as follows:

Table 3 Instance of ennoblement in Jayyusi and Le Gassick’s translation

Source Type	Text	Source
Source text	وقد تدلت ساقاي فوق هوة بلا قرار كما تدلى الليف في الخريف. فرغبت في أن اريح ظهري. فإذا بالهوة من ورائي كما هي الهوة من أمامي وتحيط بي الهوة من كل جانب. فإذا تحركت هويت . فأيقنت أنني جالس على رأس خازوق بلا رأس	Habibi 1974, P. 152
Literal translation	and my legs dangled over a bottomless abyss , just like a leaf hanging in autumn. So, I desired to relieve my back. Suddenly, the abyss was behind me as the abyss itself was in front of me, and the abyss surrounded me from every side. If I moved, I would fall . I eventually realized that I was sitting on the top of a pole without a head .	Author’s translation
Target Text	and my legs seemed to be dangling over the side of a fathomless pit. I wanted to rest my back but found that there was a pit behind me like the one in front, and that it surrounded me on all sides. If I moved, I would be certain to fall . I realized that I was sitting on the top of blunt stake.	Jayyusi 2003, P.117

The difference between the original and the translation, as illustrated above, shows another clear case of ennoblement, resulting in language simplification, loss of metaphorical language and paraphrasing. A central notion in the original is the strategic repetition of the word “huwwa,” or abyss. While Habibi repeats the word “huwwa” five times in a fifteen-word sentence— four times in its nominal form and once in its verbal form, the translators opt for variation, using “pit”, “one”, “it”, to refer to “huwwa”, with the verbal form “hawaytu” totally lost in translation because the nominal and verbal forms of “huwwa,” or abyss, are not derivatives in English, as is the case in Arabic. The translators’ lexical deviation from the original shadows the intended impact, playing down the symbolism of the Palestinian struggle against colonization.

Moreover, whereas Habibi uses “a pole without a head” to describe where he found himself sitting, the translators employ the phrase “blunt stake,” exchanging the metaphorical use “pole without a head” for a more straightforward, less intense description. The original shows a more vivid description in which the (anti-)hero is trapped through the use of “bottomless abyss” and “leaf hanging in autumn,” heightening the traumatic experience through poetic and metaphorical use. The translation is more direct. Overall, the translators’ employment of ennoblement reveals a delicate balance between commercial appeal and faithfulness to the original text’s cultural and linguistic nuances, which highlights the intricate dynamics inherent in the act of translation (Berman, 1995).

6.2 Expansion

Another deforming tendency identified in the translation is the employment of expansion, that is the “unfolding of what, in the original, is folded” (Berman, 1995, p.290). Expansion is manifested in the provision of more information about the protagonist and the broader cultural and political context of his identity, as illustrated in the example below.

Table 4 Instance of expansion in Jayyusi and Le Gassick's translation

Source Type	Text	Source
Source text	الوقائع الغريبة في اختفاء سعيد أبي النحس المتشائل	Habibi 1974
Literal translation	The strange happenings in the disappearance of Saeed abi an-Nahs (his fathre's name, meaning the ill-fated) the Pessoptimist)	Author's translation
Target Text	The Secret life of Saeed, The Ill-Fated Pessoptimist: <i>A Palestinian who became an Israeli Citizen</i>	Jayyusi, 1989

The original title is relatively concise in comparison with its translated counterpart. While the original title remains silent on Saeed's national identity and the geopolitical context surrounding the narrative, the translation clearly mentions that he is "Palestinian," adding that he "became an Israeli citizen". This instance of expansion added a new cultural and political dimension to the protagonist's identity, providing the reader with an insight not present in the original title. This expansion not only shifts the narrative focus from Saeed's mysterious life to a more character-centric account but also situates it in a broader, more complex social and political landscape. Interesting, this addition in the title features in the 1989 edition of the novel, but is omitted in the 2003 edition. The addition of citizenship in the title not only prompts curiosity about the protagonist's identity but is also meant to potentially evoke different initial reactions from readers.

6.3 Destruction of rhythms

This practice among translators, according to Berman, tends to distort the rhythm and flow of the source text.

Table 5 Instance of destruction of rhythms in Jayyusi and Le Gassick's translation

Source Type	Text	Source
Source text	فقلت متهمكما وأنا أظاهرا بالجهل بالجيوبوليتيكا : ها نحن خرجنا عن الخط الأخضر ودخلنا في خط العرب الأغبر , الذين تركوا أراضهم أنتيكا .	Habibi 1974, P.166
Literal translation	Then I said sarcastically feigning ignorance of geopolitiicaa : Oh, we have exited al khatt al Akhdar and entered khatt al Arab al aghbar , who left their territories antiicaa	Author's translation
Target Text	Feigning ignorance of geopolitics, I commented sarcastically, "so now we have left the green belt and entered the dust bowl of the Arabs, who have led their lands go to waste."	Jayyusi 2003, P.127

The original text intentionally employs an ABBA rhythmic pattern, a feature that Jayyusi's translation has clearly overlooked. This rhythmic structure brings together words like "geopolitiicaa" (geopolitical) and "antiicaa" (waste), creating a rhyming effect. Similarly, the pairing of "al khatt al Akhdar" (green line) and "khatt al Arab al aghbar (Arab line of dust) is intentionally intended to create a rhyming oxymoron, meant to create bitter mockery. However, the question remains as to whether the rhyming structure plays a role in conveying the intended meaning. Recognized for his linguistic prowess, Habibi is known to have made language as the protagonist in *The Pessoptimist*, with Saeed assuming the anti-hero role in the narrative. Being the protagonist, language in *The Pessoptimist* is crafted in a way that defies any attempt at domestication.

Alongside poking fun, the ABBA rhyme serves to portray a grim reality imposed by the geopolitical tensions post the 1949 truce agreement. It is through the juxtaposition of such terms as "geopolitiicaa" and "antiicaa" that the writer cynically portrays the fruitlessness of the negotiations with Israel, resulting in growing colonization and the spiralling of land confiscation. The mockery of the "Green Line" created by Israel reinforces this cynicism. The rhyming expressions create humour and the latter is used as survival tactic through which Saeed navigates daily oppression and torture unscathed. Doubtlessly, adopting a foreignizing approach that recognizes the inextricability of meaning and rhythm could have been more effective at relaying the deliberate cynicism inherent in the rhyming expressions through a direct transliteration, as championed by Venuti (2008).

6.4 Qualitative impoverishment

Another deforming tendency frequently encountered in the Jayyusi's translation is qualitative impoverishment—the dilution of the quality of the original text, including linguistic richness, cultural nuances and aesthetic qualities. A clear instance of this tendency is illustrated in the below table.

Table 6 Instance of qualitative impoverishment

Source Type	Text	Source
Source text	جاءت النهاية حين استيقظت في ليلة بلا نهاية فلم أجدني في فراشي. فزارتني البردية فمددت لها يدي أبحث عن سترة فإذا بها تقبض ريح. رأيتني أجلس على أرض صفاح باردة مستديرة. لا يزيد قطرها على ذراع. وكانت الريح صرصرا والأرض قرقرا . وقد تدلت ساقاي فوق هوة بلا قرار كما تدلى الليف في الخريف.	Habibi 1974, P.152
Literal translation	The end came when I woke up in a night without an end, and I did not find myself in my bed. The chill visited me, so I reached out my hand to it, searching for a jacket, only to discover it is grasping the wind. I saw myself sitting on a cold, round marble floor. Its diameter did not exceed an arm's length. The wind was sarsaran (whistling), and the ground was qarqaran (creaking). My legs sprawled over an abyss without a bottom, much like a leaf dangling in autumn.	Author's translation
Target Text	The end came when I woke after one interminable night and found myself not in my bed. When I stretched out my hand for a cover I grasped nothing but void. I found myself sitting on a flat surface, cold and round, not more than a yard across. A wind was blowing, strong and bitter cold, and my legs seemed to be dangling over the side of a bottomless pit.	Jayyusi 2003, P.117

The reduction of the richness of language in the above extract is evident in the rendition of the two words “sarsaran” and “qarqaran,” translated as “strong” and “cold,” respectively. While strong and cold convey the meaning of their Arabic counterparts, they, according to Berman, “lack their sonorous richness and, correspondingly, their signifying or iconic features” (Berman, 1995, p. 291). It is noteworthy that the word “qarqaran,” derived from “qarr,” or bitter coldness, does not exist in Arabic; rather, it is coined by Habibi to rhyme with “sarsaran” to the effect of provoking laughter amidst escalating bitterness. Jayyusi's translation, while technically accurate, fails to reproduce this effect, thus diminishing the full impact of the original text.

The employment of Barman's qualitative impoverishment goes beyond the linguistic level, encompassing the broader cultural and thematic dimensions. This results in the flattening of the narrative's emotional resonance and thematic depth. This reduction plays down the bitter sarcasm employed by Habibi when referring to the elements. The fate, personified in the elements, which would be expected to intervene and support the protagonist in his plight with the colonizer, only serves to exacerbate their suffering. In *The Pessoptimist* where language is the cornerstone of the narrative that shapes the depth of the Palestinian identity and existential oppression imposed on them, such loss becomes remarkably significant.

6.5 Rationalization

According to Berman, rationalization is the simplification of complex or ambiguous elements in the original text, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 7 Instance of rationalization

Text Type	Text	Source
Source text	لم يشأ الرجل الكبير إلا أن يصحيني إلى بيت خالتي فيسلمني إلى مدير السجن تسليم اليد باليد فنحن الذين ورثنا الدولة عن آبائنا، تظل مراتبنا عالية حتى في قاووش السجن .	Habibi 1974, p. 159
Literal translation	The big man wished for nothing but to accompany me to <i>my aunt's house</i> then hand me over to the warden hand in hand, as we who inherited the state from our fathers maintain our high ranks even in the <i>quawuush</i> of prison (prison's dungeons).	Author's translation
Target Text	The big man insisted on accompanying me to jail to hand me over personally to the warden. Those as myself, inherited the state from our own fathers, remain high in status even in prison.	Jayyusi 2003, p.123

Being the cornerstone of the novel, sarcasm is repeatedly conveyed through meticulous selection of vocabulary in *The Pessoptimist*. Any rationalization, or simplification of these elements risks diluting, or altogether undermining, its potency. While the translators succeeded in partially maintaining sarcasm by directly translating the sarcastic phrases of “arrajulu alkabir” as “the big man” and “yeshabuni” as “accompanying me”— implying a sense of VIP treatment, not a prisoner status— they falter in maintaining the hyperbaton in “wished for nothing but.” Although crucial in delivering the biting effect of sarcasm, the rhetorical structure of “wished for nothing but” is rendered into a single word, “insisted,” and the idiomatic expression “handing me over...hand in hand” is replaced by “hand me over personally”— a translation that obviously prioritizes naturalness and idiomaticity at the expense of foreignness.

6.6 Destruction of vernacular networks

A notable feature of Habibi’s novel is its intricate intertwining of the formal literary language, or high variety, with the everyday colloquial utterance, or low variety, known as diglossia. The deliberate incorporation of diglossia in the fabric of the novel does not seem to be captured by the translation, resulting in a unique case of exoticization, where the richness of vernacular networks is flattened. Undoubtedly, the translation that takes liberties with these vernacular networks, or identity markers, obviously leans towards the domestication end of the spectrum. Expressions such as “my aunt’s house,” “qawuush,” “livable daughter,” “died laughing” and “to the point of bursting my sides,” to cite but a few, lose their nuanced cultural resonance in translation, as illustrated in the below table. This tendency to erase traces of various linguistic forms coexisting in the source text is one of Berman’s twelve deforming tendencies which he calls the destruction of the vernacular networks.

Table 8 Instance of the destruction of vernacular networks

Text Type	Text	Source
Source text	يصحبني إلى بيت خالتي تظل مراتبنا عالية حتى في قاروش السجن أن هذه الدولة ليست بنت معيشة فأغربت بالضحك حتى تقطعت خواصري	Habibi 1974, P. 159 P. 65 P. 135
Literal translation	accompanies me to <i>my aunt's house</i> our ranks remain high even in "qawuush prison," the prison cell this state is not a <i>livable daughter</i> I died laughing <i>to the point of bursting my sides</i>	Author's translation
Target Text	accompanying me to <i>jail</i> remain high in status even <i>in prison</i> . this state was <i>not fated to survive</i> and this led to more and more laughter until I <i>lost control completely and my sides felt like collapsing</i>	Jayyusi 2003, P.123 p. 50 p. 106

6.7 Destruction of expressions or idioms

The last deforming tendency that recurs in Jayyusi's translation is the destruction of culture-specific stock expressions, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 9 Instances of the destruction of expressions or idioms

Text Type	Text	Source
Source Text	(1) قلت: ما شاء الله! (2) قلت: ما شاء الله! ولكن ماذا يعمرن؟ (3) قلت: ما شاء الله! ولكن لماذا تهدمون بيوتهم خارج السجن؟ (4) قلت: ما شاء الله! وكيف كان ذلك؟ (5) قلت: ما شاء الله (6) قلت: ما شاء الله!	Habibi 1974, P.163-4
Literal Translation	(1) I said: <i>mashaallah!</i> (2) I said: <i>mashaallah!</i> But what are they building? (3) I said: <i>mashaallah!</i> What are you demolishing their homes outside the prison? (4) I said: <i>mashaallah!</i> How was that? (5) I said: <i>mashaallah!</i> (6) I said: <i>mashaallah!</i>	Author's translation
Target Text	(1) <i>God Bless you indeed</i> , sir! (2) <i>God bless you!</i> But what do you build? (3) <i>God bless you again!</i> But why do you demolish their homes outside the prisons? (4) <i>God Bless you and save you!</i> But could you explain that? (5) <i>How exactly?</i> (6) (Not translated)	Jayyusi 2003, P.125

"Masha'Allah" is a typical expression in Arabic and usually serves as a gesture of admiration for a notable achievement. Habibi in *The Pessoptimist* goes out of the way, employing it here to ironically praise great accomplishments, albeit of a sinister nature: the killing of people and the destruction of their homes. However, Jayyusi and Le Gassick's translation of "masha'Allah" appears inconsistent of what is consistently repeated six times, diluting the bitterness of sarcasm. Remarkably, the fifth instance of the exclamatory "masha'Allah" is rendered into the interrogative "how exactly?"— an interrogation devoid of any sarcastic overtones. More surprising still is the non-rendition of the final "masha'Allah" in the translation, resulting not only in the omission of a foreign element, but also hindering the escalation of sarcasm to its apex.

7. Conclusion

The qualitative evaluation of Jayyusi and Le Gassick's translation of *The Pessoptimist* from a foreignizing perspective highlights a significant presence of seven of Berman's 12 deforming tendencies in translation. The tendency of ennoblement, exemplified by linguistic, stylistic and semantic alterations, seems to obscure the novel's indigenous essence and alter its presentation to the reader. Expansion, another deforming tendency, introduces new political and cultural dimensions regarding the protagonist's identity, readjusting the narrative focus and positioning it within a broader social and political landscape. In addition, the qualitative impoverishment is evident in the dilution of linguistic richness, cultural nuances and aesthetic qualities, which reduces the emotional resonance and thematic depth of the narrative. The tendency to destroy the vernacular networks in the novel is evident in the flattening of the vernacular expressions and the loss of cultural resonance (Berman, 1995).

These findings highlight the challenges involved in the literary translation, exemplified by the manipulation of linguistic and cultural traditions during the encounter between cultures with significant power differentials, like Arabic and English (Shamma, 2018). They also reveal the significant impact of the seven deforming tendencies on the indigenous essence of *The Pessoptimist*. It should be highlighted then that translation, being a cultural artifact entangled in power dynamics, needs to unveil power imbalances and advocate for a demystifying, visible and minoritizing approach (Venuti, 2008). By doing so, translation should depart from traditional paradigms by embracing linguistic and cultural diversity that reflects the reality of cross-cultural transactions. This may lead us to reverse the delicate balance between commercial appeal and cultural and linguistic nuances. Finally, it seems that without championing a translator-centred approach, effective cross-cultural communication in literary translation remains elusive (Venuti, 2008).

The limitations of this study are twofold. First, there is a potential for personal bias that might have influenced the process of comparing and interpreting the original and translated texts, despite strict measures to adhere to Berman's negative analytic as an analyzing framework. Second, the study focused exclusively on qualitative evaluation, excluding the quantitative one. While the qualitative evaluation provided valuable insights into the diverse nuances of the translation, a quantitative evaluation could have offered an additional empirical evidence to support the findings. Regarding potential research avenues, future studies in literary translation can work on examining the impact of translation choices on reader reception and interpretation. This could provide significant insights into the dynamics of cross-cultural communication through the art of literature.

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