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Cultural Colonialism in the Translation of *Season of Migration to the North*[1]

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I. Translation, Power, and Ideology

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, or *Mawsim Al-Hijra Ela Al-Shamal*, is an Arabic novel first published in 1966. Denys Johnson-Davies produced an English translation of the novel no more than four years after the publication of the Arabic original in Beirut. The translation was published by The African Writers Series in 1969, and then reprinted by Heinemann Educational Publishers. In an interview by Ferial Ghazoul, the translator, Denys Johnson-Davies explicates that the discourse of eroticism, a dominant discourse in *Season of Migration to the North*, is the main motive behind the translation of the Arabic text into English. He goes on to say, "yes erotic has always interested me […] while the humorous, the dramatic, the tragic only too often fail when translated across the linguistic frontiers, the erotic remains effectively erotic" (Johnson-Davies and Ghazoul 83). For this reason, the translator selects the work on purpose for a specific goal in mind.

According to Douglas Robinson in *Translation and Empire: Postcolonial Theories Explained*, a hegemonic culture will only translate those works by the authors in a dominated culture that fit the former's preconceived notions of the latter. Similarly, Richard Jacquemond in "Translation and Cultural Hegemony: The Case of French Arabic Translation" states that hegemonic cultures select works from the dominated/subaltern culture that fit the prevailing stereotypes, which reflect "simplistic images of it" (139). Ultimately,

1. The outline of this paper was initially presented at *Power to Connect in a Changing World: International Conference on Language, Literature & Translation*, organized by the Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Jordan in collaboration with the Association of Professors of English and Translation at Arab Universities (APETAU) and Voices in Asia, April 22–24, 2014.

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translation is capable of presenting a distorted projection of the other, for the translator is a human being who is not free from a certain worldview. Texts, such as *Season of Migration to the North*, are selected simply because they are perceived as mysterious, strange, alien, exotic, or of interest only to specialists in the field. Thus, the considerations of this paper are the questions of how translation can create, (re)fashion, or alter the meaning and understanding of a literary text for a cross-cultural/intercultural/multicultural audience. This paper also questions whether a/the translator, in the discourse of post-colonialism, acts as a colonizer or, as Jacquemond calls it an "authoritative mediator" (140), commissioning and colonizing the text through the act of reading and translating.

Literary translations are not accorded the same status as *original works.* According to Ganesh Devy in "Translation and Literary History," Western literary criticism is guilt-contained because of translations coming into being *after* the original—the temporal sequentially which is held as a proof of diminution of literary authenticity of translations; translations can deform works once they are translated into another language which bears a different culture. As for Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, there is a longstanding notion of translation as "inferior" to the "original" where the original is a "de facto superior to the translation"; it is, in other words, a less successful copy of the creation of the translator, and in a different language (2).

With the rise of the Manipulation school in the mid-eighties—a school which was made famous through Theo Hermans, who is the editor of *The Manipulation of Literature* and *The Culture Turn*—Bassnett, André Lefevere and their colleagues (Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, who preceeded Theo Hermans, James Holmes, and José Lambert) advocated the notion that the superiority of the original text should be questioned. With these schools of translation, along with cultural studies theories, translation has come to be no longer regarded as a process of faithful reproduction of textual material; it rather involves (un)conscious acts of selection, omission, construction, and substitution of culture. Translation is, in turn, viewed by Lefevere in *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* as an act of rewriting; and by Robinson as an act of creation, focusing on issues of culture, history, power, and ideology just to mention some of the posited points of discussion. According to Bassnett and Trivedi, the most significant challenge to the notion of superiority, however, originates from the other, the Brazilian cannibals, from outside the safety of hedges and neat brick walls of Europe.

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In this sense, Octavio Paz convincingly argues that the "world is presented to us as a heap of texts, each slightly different from the one that came before it: translations of translations of translations. Each text is unique, yet at the same time, it is the translation of another text" (154). This implies that translation is an ongoing process of cross/intercultural communication, involving transfer across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Referring to the reconstitution and recreation of the text, translation, an act of writing, rewrites experiences from one culture to another, subsequently, opening a path for cross/inter-cultural mis/understanding: that is to say, translation in the supposedly postcolonial era must build a bridge creating/maintaining either peace and development or war between North/Europe and South/Africa. In other words, translation may have political dimensions where the relationships are contextualized geographically. However, English translations of non-Western works give the Western world a representation/construction of what the other is, thus making the so-called "Third World" literature available to the Western audience. Aijaz Ahmad argues in "Orientalism and After" that "a developing machinery of specifically literary translation" has brought a misrepresentation of the "Third World" literature (79). This means that translation acts as a power, representing an image(s) of the Source Text (ST) culture, and by doing so, translations create our knowledge about the culture these texts originate in. Consequently, translation becomes a political act, instigating a process of negotiation among different agents. This line of thought brings to the fore the notion of the translator as an agent, who is never free from a particular ideological standpoint, manipulating the text s/he is processing. This ideological position may translate itself either positively or negatively; Walid Fandi in "Translation as Ideology" claims that translation may present itself as a critical tool that serves to dis/articulate ideologies in any given social sphere.

In this vein, Basil Hatim and Ian Mason in *The Translator as Communicator* state that ideology encompasses the tacit assumptions, the beliefs and value systems, which are shared collectively by social groups. They have made a distinction between the ideology of translating and the translation of ideology. Translating is an ideological activity, for the translator acts in a social context and is part of that context. Translation of ideology, on the other hand, addresses the notion of mediation and how far the translator may intervene in the process of translating the text, injecting his/her own knowledge and beliefs into processing the text. The translator has a large part in translating the text

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and directing the reader into a desired meaning. Hatim and Mason go on to say that the "translator as a processor of texts, filters the text world of the source text through his/her own world view/ideology with differing results" (147). Similarly, Maria Tymoczko argues that:

> The ideology of translation is indeed a result of the translator's position, but that position is not a space between. The translator is in fact all too committed to a cultural framework, whether the framework is the source culture, the receptor culture, a third culture, or an international cultural framework that includes both the source and receptors societies. (201)

Apparently, the notion of "third space" is hard to establish from an ideological point of view: it is misleading in a world dominated and shaped in the space of a power differential, in a space of two unequal powers and languages. To sum up this point, we could say that translators in the process of translating texts are acting as a social agent mediating differences and negotiating limits and this is clearly established in the case of *Season of Migration to the North*. Therefore, they may not freely lend themselves to immersion in the business of translation, for in one way or another they un/deliberately impose their world as readers of the text on the next reader.

However, at the same time, ideology is posited as leading to a dialogic process brought about by the process of translation. This is due to the fact that translation, as postulated by Lawrence Venuti in *The Translator's Invisibility* as argued above, constantly operates in a socio-historical context, and translators are accordingly subject to the power relation differential (20). Accordingly, Dora Sales Salvador indicates in "Documentation as Ethics in Postcolonial Translation" that translation always entails an unstable relationship in terms of power exercised by one culture over the other. This leads us to argue that translation is never an innocent business for the ideology of the translator/manipulator penetrates every aspect of the translation activities. To this end, we come to the conviction that what is produced will never be a textual equivalent; it is a rewriting of the discursive values whose representations rely on the translator's ideological and political signature. Similarly, the metaphor of the colony on the surface, as viewed by Gayatri Spivak in "The Politics of Translation," portrays the colony as an imitative and inferior translational copy whose identity has been overwritten by the colonizer. At this juncture, the metaphor that the "text is female" is established, where the "text-female" is

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raped, devoured, and penetrated by the commissioner, who, by imposing his world view into the text, estranges and defamiliarizes the colony and represents the colonized as intruders. Therefore, translation, in postcolonial discourse, plays a crucial and dynamic role in the colonization and sexualization of the decision making process.

In the corpus/text of *Season of Migration to the North*, the translator, re-narrator, and decision maker constantly creates/omits discourses that deploy a biased and abusive representative image of the other against the already existing stereotyped images. For instance, in the English text, the translator constructs a cluster of discourses of "slavery," "fornication," "the phallic," and "liberal Islam" that are not present in the Arabic version, just to mention a few examples. The translator acts as a censor deleting/attenuating or neutralizing the discursive practices. The narrative in the Arabic text unfolds the discourse of "discourse of ethnicity in the UK," for instance. The English narrative of *Season of Migration* by Johnson-Davies (36), on the contrary, replaces the Arabic with the discourse of "color problem," a neutral representation of the existing reality in British politics. Meanwhile, the discourse of the "colonial companies" is replaced with the "imperial companies" which bears more of a threatening power with long term exploitation, thus highlighting more aggravation and resistance towards the colonizer. To conclude this point, the translator deliberately manipulates the text via selecting, (re)fabricating, and (re)structuring the images of the other.

In "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology," Talal Asad raises the notion of "cultural translation" along with the notion of inequality of languages. This leads us to argue that the question of power is so crucial in the act of translating culture; this implies that force is imposed upon the translations from the Third World because Third World countries are weaker in relation to Western countries. Asad ascribes this to two reasons: first, in their political-economic relations with Third World countries, Western nations have greater ability to manipulate the latter, taking into consideration the colonial past of the UK in Sudan. The UK had an imperial grip over some Arab countries which in turn created itself as a hegemonic power not only geographically but also culturally and linguistically. Arabic as a language is seen as inferior if compared to English. Secondly, Western languages produce and deploy desired knowledge more readily than Third World languages do because they are hegemonic in their effect. He goes on to say that translation is addressed to a very specific audience (such as the case of *Season of Migration*

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to the North). Asad's article is quite illuminating with regard to the discourse of postcolonial translation for it delineates a crucial issue of "translation of culture," which, in turn, articulates the notion of "language inequalities," "power/powerless," "manipulation," and "audience."

To illustrate the point, the English narrative of *Season of Migration to the North*[2] reveals the discourse of "slavery" (*SOM* 74) in a Sudanese village and in London; it comes to the surface in London. In the Arabic narrative, Wad Rayyes, a villain and womanizer is erotically presenting an account to his friends in the village of the experience of his raping a young "jariya" (meaning a girl who has just reached the age of puberty and exploited as a slave). Racially, this representation of the discourse of "slavery," so far, sounds unfair for it originates from a negative discourse, a stereotyped image asserting slavery as a system within the other. By reading the Arabic narrative against the English, it could be concluded that the semiotic sign "jariya" (Salih, *MAH* 143) connotes that the "jariya" girl possesses feminine beauty, and the beauty of such girls is renowned around the area.

Enjoying feminine beauty may seduce someone like Wad Rayyes and push him to overstep the limits by kidnapping her by force. Secondly, on the surface the English text constructs the "part for whole," metonymic discourse, which means that all the girls of "bahri" are largely "slaves," which lacks any linguistic evidence in support of this claim in the Arabic version. Therefore, the narrative implicates that girls in Bahri are renowned for their feminine beauty, which makes them subject to sexual harassment and kidnapping.

In parallel to the Sudanese village, the context of London, a center of freedom, liberalism, democracy, and human rights, contradicts the usage of the metaphor of "jariyatoka Sawsan" (which means "your slave girl, Sawsan") (*MAH* 143); such a metaphorical presentation is not supported by the language of the Arabic version. The way the narrative unfolds in the novel (142–47) could make the reader conclude that Ann Hammond, the Oxford student, is of the same age of the girl kidnapped by Wad Rayyes. She simply means that she acts as a slave to the sexual power she may find in Saeed. He is seen as an opportunity for her to experience the South and entertain herself. The narrative depicts her relation with Saeed in terms of "my love," "my lord," "my

2. In-text citations with *SOM* [Season of Migration] refer to the translated English version of the novel, while *MAH* [Mawsim Al Hijra] in-text citations refer to the original Arabic version.

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master," "[s]he knelt down before me, kissing my feet" (148). In other words, she is enslaved by the sexual power of Saeed—the South. Therefore, this representation presumably serves no other purpose apart from constructing a parallel structure to the one that is constructed in the Sudanese village. By doing so, the translator un/deliberately adds to the conflicting world of the novel (Africa/Europe), for s/he with/without the collaboration of the author charges the text with his/her own worldview of ideology. In this case, the translator has no choice but to employ his knowledge, which is converted into ideology in a postcolonial context.

Translation plays a role, whether positively or negatively, in promoting the source language/culture. In *Rethinking Translation*, Venuti states that translation involves an "active reconstitution of the foreign text mediated by the irreducible linguistic, discursive, and ideological differences of the target language culture," leading to "transculturation," and therefore determining the relationship between dominant and subordinate cultures (10). Thus, according to Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes*, the zones are characterized by conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. Western societies have turned into an expansive contact zone, where inter/cross cultural relations contribute to the formation of all national cultures. The contact zones reach a peak, as the centre has witnessed floods of compulsory emigrations due to wars, for instance. Nevertheless, whether it is voluntary or involuntary, it is not as free of any ideological agenda, as translation itself. To introduce a third metaphor, both the translated text and emigrants remain foreign as they are distanced from their native discourse. This point paves the way to a reconsideration of the notion of "migration" in *Season of Migration to the North* as a journey manifesting itself in various ideological/intellectual/coloniser/colonised metaphors.

Ⅱ. Migration: Sense of Place/Space

The translated title *Season of Migration to the North* is puzzling, in the sense that the Arabic term "al-Hijra" means "migration," "emigration," and "immigration." Semantically, the three terms do not enjoy the same denotative meaning, and pragmatically the meaning of each term has to be understood against a context. Undoubtedly, the discourse of "hijra" in both the Arabic and English versions is very puzzling for it is not easy to determine whether the act

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of migration implies an act of relocating the self within the same boundaries or if it is a question of moving out beyond the geographical boundaries into another geopolitical entity.

As a decision maker in postcolonial discourse, the translator concludes and the original Arabic text suggests that the notion of the "North" goes beyond the metaphor of direction and spatiality; it is a metaphor of ideology manifesting itself in various forms of discourse: geopolitics, history, climate, liberation, centre/periphery, race, and exoticism/eroticism. For instance, the reader encounters Saeed uttering, "I am the South that yearns for the North and the ice" (*SOM* 30). This statement implies, if not explicitly, that Saeed has the intention to settle down in the North, though, ideologically, life there is so tough and demanding, for the construction of a "home" requires the establishment of place, a very costly business indeed.

Again, the binary opposition "warm [S]outh" vs. "icy [N]orth" operates on the surface forging the presence of two different geopolitical climates, with the "icy landscape" seemingly predicating that Saeed's presence in London is a cooling after the burning of the desert. Because of the impact of geography, the English women easily fall prey to him because of their fascination with the mysticism and the fantasies of the Orient. Saeed always carries with him both South and North; and in London, his room is imbued with sandalwood and incense, while in Sudan he has an English room in style and content. Racially, this implies that the white woman is not ethnically discriminating against the "other." The translator may positively construct a language governing the relationship between the self and the other within the realm of power difference because such a discourse already exists in the Arabic text. Nevertheless, Saeed remains the exotic South entertaining the Centre.

With Jean Morris, Saeed retreats to the Sudan/South. An opponent to Saeed in every respect, Morris presents herself as an experienced fighter in the power struggle of sexual politics. Though his marriage to Jean Morris is doomed to failure, Saeed has never effectively managed to divorce himself from the North. Saeed keeps repeating that the train took me to Victoria station and the world of Jean Morris (*SOM* 29–31). Rhetorically, the repetition serves more than one purpose: first, Victoria station is significant and crucial to understanding the socio-political fabric in London, the cosmopolitan centre, and it is a reminder of Queen Victoria, whose reign stretched all over the South. The repetition of the icon Jean Morris sounds awkward because a first time reader of the novel has no prior knowledge of the Saeed-Morris intimate

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relations till at a later stage in the reading process. Indeed, repetition reinforces the significance of Morris to the development of the story; this adds the notion that the exotic accessories in the postcolonial era are mostly commercialized in cosmopolitan places.

Eventually, Saeed caves in and has recourse to the South to rebuild a shelter with warm and stable social relations. Psychologically, on the other hand, he is entrapped by his London life, which is confirmed by his secret room back home in Sudan. Physically, Saeed has returned home and thus there is no migration. Yet in his mind, he is still roaming the streets of London, so he has in fact migrated psychologically and mentally. This highlights the metaphor of mental activity as a journey, bringing to the fore the discourse of dis/location. Mentally, he is dislocated from his reality; his mind is colonized though the colonial power has physically withdrawn its troops. Intimidated by Jean Morris, Saeed's migration remains a serious challenge to the translator. Namely, the act of translation might overshadow a state of disillusionment for the original text itself engages the reader with two representations: the internal vs. the external, where each dimension affiliates itself with a particular geopolitical sphere. What makes things worse is that both the external and internal dimension of the self constructs different geopolitical spaces bringing the discourse of power relations and postcolonial translation to a state of conflict, rather than a state of, at least, a fragile peace. Thus, the task of the translator becomes problematic.

In any case, processing the title, the Arabic and/or the English within the context of postcolonial discourse emerges as paradoxical, and the paradox lies in the sustained metaphor of directionality running all through the text from South to North and vice versa. The title details a portrait of the landscape in terms of a different design, illuminating in the mind the sense of place and space. It is frankly a question of dis/location. In London, the imperial design is even more complicated: it complicates the straightforward notion of "home" as opposed to the site of migration. Saeed's flat in London, a showcase, is decorated with exotic accessories representing the South; moreover, he is obsessed with telling his women exotic fantasies such as when he tells Seymour that the streets of his country are teeming with elephants, lions, and crocodiles. This shows one crucial point, that is, as for place-sense relation, Saeed has no emotions towards the Sudan, therefore dislocating himself from the South.

Naturalized British, Saeed, decides to return home to Wadi Hamid after seven years in imprisonment — an act which he considers an honorable record of fame since he took revenge upon the colonizer's women. Upon his return,

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Saeed built a study area annexed to his house. It is noteworthy that all of the books shelved there are in English, and ironically, include a copy of the meanings of the Holy Quran translated into English (Salih, *MAH* 137), instead of keeping a copy in Arabic which is the original language of the Holy Quran and his mother tongue. This may be interpreted as the influence of colonialism not only on culture and politics, but also on religion. Possessing all the documents in English articulates the discourse of linguistic imperialism and the threats it poses to national identity and in turn its negative impact on Arabic. Using the language of the colonizer denotes that Saeed, who plans to take vengeance on the other, is still suffering from the colonial yoke. To push the point further, we may reassert that the colonial power repossesses the colonies via linguistic imperialism, and, accordingly, the story of translating the spatial metaphor of migration becomes more complicated. In this context, there would be no migration and no liberation of the other to regain the dignity and the freedom that the colonial power has taken from them. Saeed is too absorbed in the Western culture, vehemently associating himself with the self. Following the failure of the colonial power to root him within the social space of the Sudanese village, he is determined physically/mentally to depart this colonized world, leaving his wife and his children at the mercy of the village womanizer, Wad Rayyes. Finally, his disappearance in the South is as ideologically ambiguous as his migration to the North.

Geographically, the Western reader is no doubt aware of the implications of North and South, bearing in mind the misconceptions about each culture. Africa (South) is a symbol of slavery, savagery, weakness of will, the incapacity to exercise self-control, and barbarity, all incarnated in both Othello and Saeed, whereas Europe (North) is always the master, both civilized and cultured. In addition, the Arab/European conflict is represented in the conflict between East and West: in *Season of Migration*, Saeed says “I’m like Othello, Arab-African” (*SOM* 8). It is evident that in colonial discourse the binary opposition South/North is relevant to East/West. In other words, Africa, or South, will remain contained in a symbolic degradation and backwardness. In such a context, South becomes East in its significance in postcolonial discourse while North is identical with the significance of the West. For this simple reason, the recreation of the title remains a challenge in the realm of power differential, whereby the colonizer determines the road map that always fits with his interests. Largely, the illusion incorporating Saeed enables the translator to select metonymically the items that do fit to intertwine the fabric of the text.

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Ⅲ. The Exhibition of Exoticism

Call him "god" or "pagan" or "magic" or the "Oxfordian" (Salih, *MAH* 143), it would not make much difference as long as the South remains the South, the exotic, and in a binary opposition with the familiar, the North. Ideologically, the translator, a colonizer, in the process of rewriting the Arabic version, has opted for exoticism, and the audience may enjoy in reading the "other," a translation strategy with the aim of making the Arabic a trifle alien, and, in turn, mocking and mimicking the other self. This act of exoticism, which is purposefully designed to preserve the linguistic features within the cultural context, serves the goal of creating a difference. That is to say, on the surface, it is fabricated to show resistance to the colonial discourse and colonial power; yet the reality is different. In principle, this act of "literalness" or "foreignization," though small in terms of percentage, fashions the East into a portable/disposable exhibition to be exotically experienced/enjoyed by the dominant white gaze. In this case, domesticating would seem to be less of a colonial strategy. With this in mind, these representations deploy the colonial power in action, imposing order and meaning on the East/South. In reality, they present the power that constructs the East as Exhibition. The colonizer, by making certain chunks of the text alien/exotic/erotic, creates images that may sound clumsy, unpleasant, uninteresting, and hard to understand. Un/intentionally, a metaphor of de-familiarization comes into play. To illustrate this, just a few cases of proverbial texts could be considered.

As space and time do not permit close reading for each of these statements in the narrative, some examples are highlighted to explain the notions of irony, laughter, and misunderstanding that may stem from resorting to "literalness" as a decision making process. In such a text as "[h]e was so slow a goat could make off with his supper" (*SOM* 75), the narrator in the Arabic text is jokingly mocking and making fun of Bakri, Bint Majzoub's husband, questioning his sexual potency. In the narrative, Wad Rayyes structured a correlation between Bakri and the "goat" pinpointing the fact that Bakri is physically as vulnerable as a goat. It is hard to buy Bint Mazjoub's propaganda and the way she advertises Bakri's sexual power and the sexual pleasure he gives her. The literal translation, an act of colonization, representing the other exotically, creates an image that may make the English reader burst into laughter, on the one hand, and it may evoke in his/her mind a state of misunderstanding of the other. Translating this idiomatic expression literally in English rather than

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paraphrasing, explicating, or finding a reasonably corresponding expression, the translation strategy is an act of colonization.

Opting deliberately for exoticism, the text producer steers the reader's attention to another exotic text, the concrete/visual text of Saeed in London, and the many exotic readings and appreciation given to the text such as the exhibition of South London. That is to say, the two texts, the proverbial textual material, construct concrete images on the surface; Saeed, the concrete text, in London, creates a parallel and coherent portrait in the reader's mind at the expense of the Arabic text. This point of exoticism may be exemplified in many phrases, all of which are of equal importance. Take, for example, the following phrases displaying the manner in which white women are impressed by Saeed, who migrates to London. The following examples show how in *Season of Migration*, Saeed is considered the exotic oriental masculine authority and power: "he is read either a god/slave where the middle ground" (*SOM* 108), "[a] naked, primitive creature" (38), "you're a savage bull" said Jean Morris (33), "you're a cannibal" said Isabella Seymour (40), "you black demon. […] You black god" (106), "how marvellous your black color is. […] the color of magic and mystery and obscenities" said by Sheila Greenwood (139), "[o] pagan god of mine" (108), and "[b]lackman" (139).

In general terms, the translator, a commissioner investing exoticism in reframing the Arabic text, has effectively constructed and highlighted an erotic image representing the other, while the original text does not emphasize such images of the native. Mostly apparent is that the English translation seems to direct the reader to an erotic mapping of the text than writing back to a postcolonial issue. Deliberately, as it may appear, the text producer of the English translation focused on eroticizing the text in favour of the interest of the Target Text (TT) audience, who is thirsty for entertainment with the vastness, stillness, and imaginative terrain, the seas/oceans of sand stretching all over the South. It is the place for holidaying as the self frees its mind with the magic of the South and its gods.

Ⅳ. Sex and Race

Typographically, the text is a landscape on which the colonizer/the translator positions his troops. These troops run the land and the everyday life of the colony. Discourses of different values were positioned by the translator of

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the English version of the Arabic along the terrains of the text, stretching from the traditional Sudanese village right down to the South, up to the North, to London, the heart of the colonial power. Due to this occupation, as it were, the discourse of sex is the core theme deployed in the text, a motivation for rewriting the story in Arabic, and its translation to English and other colonial languages. *Season of Migration to the North* with its emphasis placed on the ritual of "sex and eroticism" in the village, mirrors the dark man against the dark woman, with woman as nothing but the property of man. Majzoub, for instance, states that "women belong to men" (*SOM* 99), portraying woman as merely a belonging, or a possession, which may give the colonial power the reason to intrude into the business of the other as a savior of women.

This statement, "women belong to men," suggests that the notion of gender/sex, a social construct, structures gender identity, which is inherent with other identities such as race, religion, ethnicity, and sexuality. Gender and identity are defined by Jon Swain as a "system of culturally constructed identities, expressed in ideologies of masculinity and femininity, interacting with socially structured relationships in divisions of labour and leisure, sexuality, and power between men and women" (62). This means gender as a social act and construct has to be considered and processed against other crucial factors: race, class, religion, age, and sexuality. Furthermore, this means that gender identity is dynamic: it varies over time, space, and context. In post-colonialism, the notion of colonial identity and the gender of the colonized have been extensively studied with emphasis placed on how the colonized (re)construct their identities. Post-colonialism also concerns itself with the formation of identities, the role played by colonial powers, and the reproduction of culture in formerly colonized countries.

In this context of sex and race, it is quite plausible to focus on the question of identity, a crucial discourse that is represented in the village, with a focus on the identity of Majzoub, the spokeswoman in the village. Majzoub, a woman in her seventies, drinks beer, whisky, and the local Sudanese drink; meanwhile, she smokes cigarettes and chats with the men in the village and engages in vulgarity and obscenity as most of the narrative she has constructed is vulgar and obscene, though she is a descendent of a royal family. She enjoys as high a position as that of the male establishment in power. She creates her space within the space ensuring that she is an indispensable representative of the other in the world of masculinity. Occupying a prominent position in the world of men, she is engaged in narrating erotic stories concerning either the discourse of

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violence that led to the death of Husna Bint Mahmoud (Husna, the daughter of Mahmoud) or her husband Wad Rayyes, or engaged in different story narratives with other males in the village.

The following excerpts highlight the manifestations of the discursive strategies channelled across the terrain of the text. The way the Arabic text is manipulated most of the time is via a reconstruction of the discourse(s) that do not exist originally in the Arabic text, or at least on the surface its representation in the English version is not valued, for example:

1. The infidel women are not so knowledgeable about this business as our village girls, said Bint Majzoub. They are uncircumcised and treat the whole business like having a drink of water. The village girl rubbed herself all over with oil and perfume […]. (*Season of Migration* 67)

   حريم النصارى لا يعرفن لهذا الشيء كما تعرف له بنات البلد. نساء غلف، الحكاية عندهن كشرب الماء. بنت البلد تعمل الدلكة والدخان والريحة .(*Mawsim Al-Hijra Ela Al-Shamal* 84)

2. They say the infidel women are something Unbelievable. (*Season of Migration* 80)

   قالوا نسوان النصارى شيء فوق التصور .(*Mawsim Al-Hijra Ela Al-Shamal* 83)

3. That is enough of the heathen's drink, said Bint Majzoub, it's certainly formidable stuff and not a bit like date arak. (*Season of Migration* 125)

   هذا يكفي. خمر النصارى هذه جبارة، ليست كعرق التمر .(*Mawsim Al-Hijra Ela Al-Shamal* 126)

4. Sometimes she would hear me out in silence, a Christian sympathy in her Eyes. (*Season of Migration* 38)

   وأحياناً تصغي إلي في صمت، وفي عينيها عطف مسيحي .(*Mawsim Al-Hijra Ela Al-Shamal* 41)

By way of close reading, the reader of the English narrative may note two fundamental elements: first, sex in the South is a ritual practiced by the Southerners, contrasting women's identity in the South against women in the North, who, in view of Bint Majzoub enjoy no sex rituals—sex to the Northerners is like having "a drink of water" (*MAH* 84). Second, the above

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narrative, as it unfolds, brings about a number of discourses delineating the South/North binary relation. Discourses of the "infidel women," "sex as business," the "heathens," and the "uncircumcised women" operate all across the text and right from the beginning (*SOM* 4). By way of processing the narrative, the discourse of the "infidel," as it emerges, creates a pejorative image inflicting violence upon the ST culture. The Arabic term "Nasara" (meaning Christians) is positively used in the Quran as well as in everyday Arabic; such a term is being overlooked on the part of the translator. To a Muslim, it is socially and religiously not permissible to abuse the term "Nasara" for it is a divine commandment on the Muslim to believe in Christianity as a divine religion.

This act of imposing a discourse on the text stems from either the ideology of the translator who could not free himself/herself from ideology given that he is a colonizer, or it is a question of differential power relations, the South is unequal to the North. That is to say, power always fabricates stories bringing to the fore the binary opposition of the believers vs. the infidels with the West as the believers and the East the infidels; however, in the passage quoted, the infidels refer to the West. This act of colonization deploys on the surface a state of confrontation between the two landscapes: the South vs. the North. But, how far can we argue that the village in the Sudan is so dogmatic, indoctrinated, and fanatic, bearing in mind that Islam is not a major force in their every day life inasmuch as the social rituals they vehemently adhered to? Their response to Husna's marriage to Wad Rayyes is a crystal clear case in which "women belong to men"; such a norm is social rather than religious.

The second point to highlight is the discourse of "(un)circumcised" women. This hot issue of the "circumcised" is abusively invested by groups of human rights, who in turn, put pressure on western governments to pressure, for instance, the Sudanese government to combat such inhuman, primitive, and savage ritual; bluntly, it is a violation of human rights. As a ritual in certain Sudanese and African tribes, this act is associated with identity, for the girl attains a new social status, a status that culturally endows upon her dignity and respect. The uncircumcised Sudanese girl is culturally portrayed as a rebel, and an outcast. However, one may argue that if circumcision confers on women a status not achieved by other means, then it is at the price of sexual satisfaction and might be a denial of her sexual nature, which is a real colonial act of invasion and violence, unjustified by religion or consideration of health. To wrap up this point, according to Oladosu A. Ayinde, the discourse of

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circumcision in Sudanese tribes is a positive ritual by which women maintain their status in society. To the English reader, knowingly or unknowingly, this practice is negative.

Again, in the third excerpt text as mentioned above, Bint Majzoub along with the narrator is drinking Scottish whisky, adding another dimension to her identity, that of a woman who indulges in alcohol. This text stereotypically deploys on the surface the discourse of "heathens" collocating with the term "wine" thereby reinstating the binary "heathens vs. believers." This image corresponds initially to images used by the West to represent the Arab East and Muslims. Such a stereotype includes the South, the Portuguese and the Spanish who stigmatized the South Americans and branded them "heathens." The translator translating from the subaltern cultures to the hegemonic culture assumes himself/herself an "authoritative mediator" outside the limits of the self, to use Jacquemond's term. That is to say, the translator, in the act of processing the text, acts as a commissioner colonizing the text via imposing his/her system of beliefs onto the text, for the sake of constituting a representation of the other in a manner that is fitting to the Empire's interest. The translator overlooks many religious and cultural expressions that denote him as an outsider to the Arabic text. The author of the novel does not downplay such issues, but taking into consideration his audience, he need not explain what is naturally understood by an average reader.

The last excerpt of the above narrative, in comparison with the other discourses, creates a positive act of manipulation via the representation of the discourse of "Christian sympathy" (Salih, *MAH* 41). Acting as a narrator structuring the narrative, the text producer, ethically enough opts for a positive representation of "Christian sympathy." In this context, such sympathy highlights the reason that prompts the narrator to construct such a fair representation: it demonstrates the self and the other as equal. A possible answer may ascribe this to the fact that the translator in designing such a decision sympathizes with poor Saeed who opted for a voluntarily exile in the North in search of a better option, for a Western dream. By doing so, a positive representation would be more than enough to portray him to the audience as one of "us" and not one of "them."

In parallel to Bint Majzoub who occupies much of the narrative in the discourse of *Season of Migration to the North*, the reader meets the character of Wad Rayyes, who is an outspoken man and enjoys the pleasure of sex. In the Arabic text, Wad Rayyes, a womanizer, is so keen on twisting the Quranic text

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to get what he wants, that is, his desire and interests in the village discourse of sexuality:

> Almighty God sanctioned marriage and He sanctioned divorce. "Take them with liberality and separate from them with liberality," he said. "Women and children are the adornment of life on this earth," God said in His noble Book. I [the narrator] said to Wad Rayyes that the Koran did not say "Women and Children" but "Wealth and Children." He answered: "In any case, there's no pleasure like that of fornication." (*Season of Migration* 78)

> الله سبحانه حلل الزواج وحلل الطلاق وقال ما معناه خذوهن بإحسان أو فارقوهن بإحسان .
> وقال في كتابه العزيز: ((النسوان والبنون زينة الحياة الدنيا)) . وقلت لود الريس إن القرآن لم يقل ((النسوان والبنون)) ولكنه قال ((المال والبنون)) . فقال: ((مهما يكن، لا توجد لذة أعظم من لذة النكاح)).
>
> (*Mawsim Al-Hijra Ela Al-Shamal* 81–82)

This excerpt demonstrates two crucial acts of manipulation: The Arabic text deploys in more than one place acts of manipulation executed by Wad Rayyes himself; he twists the text to serve his interest with reference to the discourse of sex and marriage, to permit him to marry without the consent of a woman and divorce at his own convenient time. He insists that the Quran delivers a significant representation of "woman and children" as the essence of the "adornment in life" (*SOM* 78). He expresses his sexuality through his marriages, ignoring, in principle, woman's consent as a condition to be observed in Islamic teachings. The translator, on the contrary, follows the same track forged by Wad Rayyes; the translated excerpt negatively selects misrepresentation of the discourse of "liberal Islam" and the discourse of "fornication." As it may seem, the translator imposes his ideology on the text. The discourse of "liberal Islam" may fit well with the Western context, and such a brand name may gain currency and would be easily commercialized in the Western context. In other words, it is an attempt to deploy Islam with more than one label: liberal Islam vs. Islamic fundamentalism. Throughout this discourse, the reader recognizes the discourse of "fornication," a discourse that is consistent with the discourse of liberal Islam. Substituting the discourse of marriage with fornication is fabricated to suggest that Islam, as a liberal religion permitting someone to have sexual relations out of wedlock, is permissible. However, abusing the text in this way implies that the abuser may (un)knowingly inflict a physical and

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verbal act of violence on the victimized text. To go to the other extreme, we could easily say it is an act of displacement imposed on the text by force.

V. Color and Obscenity

Culturally, the novel is intimidating, rather than intriguing, because the implicit sexual scenes and passages for the Arab reader are neither habitual nor cultural in Arabic works. The impact/effect of the novel depends on who the reader is. A Western reading/understanding of the novel in translation does not have that similar impact on the Western reader as it does when read in Arabic, especially, when one reads "two thighs, opened wide and white" (Salih, *MAH* 48). As the narrator was wandering around the village late at night, he eavesdrops on Wad Rayyes and his wife. Ideologically, the metaphor of the color "white" comes to the surface bringing to the mind the mental landscape of the binaries: white versus black, or European versus African; "whiteness" will have its significance for that particular Black/African culture since it is the opposing color. The significance of the metaphor of the color "white" lies in conjuring up the discourse of "power"; "white is power" and "black is powerless," and its impact upon the narrator/reader himself. (Un)consciously, the narrator, by way of uttering this statement, shows the way his mental landscape is colonized by the power of the white woman. Nostalgically, the narrator is recalling the pleasurable time he used to spend with his girl friend(s) in London. Reassuringly enough, the metaphor of the "white" explicates that the narrator, though living at home with his grandfather and the villagers, is still mentally colonized by the metaphor that sex is power. As has been said, the narrator is mentally suffering the tortures of being dislocated. The metaphor of the "white thighs" may not leave any negative/positive impact on the Western reader. As for the politics of translation, the metaphor of the "white thighs" explicates in the Arabic text that the colonial power is in effect in control of the mental landscape of the other. The impact of explicit obscenity in literature on Arab/Muslim/African readers differs from its impact on any European/White readers in Western culture—where sexuality is less of a taboo in literature.

The Arabic version invites the other to adapt to a Western style of life; Salih himself invests in the language of the colonizer, but not his native language Arabic. The Arabic version questions and interrogates the cultural representations of the other, namely, women in liberation. As manifested in

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various discourses in the Arabic text, Salih implicitly and explicitly calls for the other to adopt the western notions of freedom and secular humanism. The question of race and gender occupies a portion of the Arabic text with a focus on women's rights. The Arabic text, for example, has brought to light at least two practices in the Sudanese village: first, the notion of forced marriage and then female genital mutilation. The dialogue that took place between Majzoub and the narrator over the business of Husna's marriage to Wad Rayyes illustrates and conveys the message across the North that "women belong to men." Woman is just "male" property; she is oppressed, enslaved, and cannot marry for love. Therefore, translating the other into the realm of the self brings confrontation between East/West.

In Muslim cultures, obscenity is not only a matter of transgressing religion, but also a matter of cultural difference. Muslim culture stems from the Holy Quran, and at many points, they cannot be separated. In *Season of Migration,* Saeed violates his cultural expectations and religion. His expectations about Western women are "[s]uch a woman — there are many of her type in Europe — knows no fear; they accept life with gaiety and curiosity. And I am a thirsty desert, a wilderness of Southern desires" (*SOM* 38). The ends justify the means. He cannot violate/transgress Islam, which is both religion and culture, yet for the sake of revenge, or rather fun and love play, he will use what is convenient when Saeed states that he will liberate Africa with his phallic organ (120) as a means of colonial machinery. Significantly, such an utterance sounds devoid of any sensible meaning; rather, it is bluntly a hollow joke stigmatizing the South. While the translator penetrates the text and fleshes it out, he constructs an erotic image bringing to the surface the discourse of pornography, a negative stereotyped image commercializing Saeed, the thirsty desert, the part for whole representing the South, as villain and sex seekers. This might also be read in a different light: Saeed's real vehicle of (colonial) resistance, and a universal one, is the colonizer's desire/need for him to represent the stereotyped image of the white woman's sexual attraction to the black/colored man. This is an image that is persistent in literature and not only in colonial/imperial relations, but in mistress-slave relationships in ancient Rome, and the ancient Arab world — the empowered female and the sexually attractive disempowered male. Saeed does indeed have a valuable card that he can play and use against the white female "colonizer." At their home country, they are deprived of physical intimacy, and when they come to London, they entertain themselves with love play and by bedding the white

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woman. Therefore, the unresolved dilemma at home is exotically/erotically resolved in the Center; it further shows that the Centre offers a solution to the lack of sexual freedom in the South.

Ideologically, the discourse of liberation sounds vague, inasmuch as the discourse of "migration" itself, especially if we come to know that its infrastructure, the power of knowledge, cannot be maintained. In jest, the discourse of "liberation" would never come to light for Jean Morris, the white woman who has turned Saeed's dream of migration to the North — a dream of immersing himself in the dominant space — into a nightmare ending with an act of terror: Morris is stabbed to death by a man from the South. Using force, or deliberately manipulating and changing the Arabic text through the translation process into English, to fill in the "dots" in the Arabic text with items suitable for the western context, the translator opts for the "phallic" symbol of knowledge/intellectuality — a mightier weapon enabling the other to possess knowledge through the course of time. This, in turn, qualifies the other to reach the level of the colonizer; indeed, the text as a "female" belongs to the translator; it is his property since "women belong to men." The translator adds or deletes what is crucial to his representation of the other to reinforce his ideology and stereotyping of the other.

Ⅵ. Conclusion

To conclude, the analysis of the process of translation in terms of power relations in the postcolonial discourse fundamentally illustrates and exemplifies the notion of the text as "female," who is subdued, oppressed, and raped by the colonizer, the translator. As "women belong to men," the translator possesses the text as a woman who is abandoned to the mercy of the power of an oppressor-translator with his ideology penetrating the flesh of the text to refashion cultural representation contained in the text for ideological and political purposes. That is, the narrative of the English version, as it unfolds, and, as has been shown in the discussion, points to the translator, a decision maker, as one who un/intentionally stereotypes and stigmatizes the other. The translator of the English text may be presumed to play the role of the British Commissioner in the Sudan. Twisting the text in various places, the translator with his manoeuvres interweaves the text with the images and the representations of chunks of the targeted culture. In other words, he has

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refashioned and repacked the text in the manner of his worldview and ideology.

As explicated by Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier, the discursive power that the First World wields over the third developing world necessarily affects the self readings of one's own production of the text. This means that language itself is never neutral/innocent; it is rather "loaded with ideology" (50) and a tool of power. Substantially, the decisions that have been rigorously taken in the act of colonizing the text demonstrate that translation within the realm of postcolonial studies is no doubt subject to colonial power rather than a process of "hospitality" to use Paul Ricoeur's term. That is to say, the political weight and hegemonic position of English would inevitably lead the translator to surrender, subdue, alienate, estrange, and colonize the discursive values of the text. Consequently, this brings to the surface a conflict, violence, hate, misunderstanding, and even confrontation.

Based on this, we may metaphorically claim that the English version is as a "stranger" like Saeed's estrangement in both London and the village of Wadi Hamid with no hope of being integrated within the system, the colonial system. As an act of reading, the English version spells out harsh criticism against the other with a focus on the discourse of women's rights, sexuality, race, identity, and religion as a mechanism shaping the everyday life of the South. Pragmatically, on the surface, the translator shuns the reinstatement of a dialogic reinforcing of the discourse of translation as an act of "intimacy" to use Spivak's term of foreignization. In the act of rewriting *Season of Migration to the North*, the translator manipulates the text right from the beginning utilizing a variety of discourses and translation strategies ranging from the literal to domestication.

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Abstract

Translations of non-Western works introduce other cultures to the Western world. Translation is understood to be an act of rewriting/creation, which plays a role in promoting the source language and culture. Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* is a Sudanese Arab-African novel, translated into English. From a postcolonial perspective, reading the novel in translation does not convey the qualities of the original work to the Western reader. The translation is rather a reconstitution of the text mediated by the differences in the culture of the target language and this determines the relationship between dominant and subordinate cultures through "transculturation." This paper also addresses the question of whether the translation of literature conveys a true cultural presentation of the other, or whether the translator, in postcolonial discourse, acts as a colonizer of the text, a space open to colonization.

Keywords: cultural studies, power, ideology, color, race, obscenity, postcolonial translation

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