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EXPLORING THE PITFALLS OF LITERARY TRANSLATION: A STUDY OF SOME ARABIC TRANSLATIONS OF FRANZ KAFKA

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ABSTRACT

It is a great challenge to literary translators to try to reproduce a text embedded in linguistic, literary, cultural and social conventions to an alien language with systems that are inevitably different. This incompatibility between the source language and the receptor language renders literary translation susceptible to a whole range of flaws and imperfections that strip the literary work of its splendor, naturalness, and in some cases, of its meaning. It is not just translating words but shifting a work from one literary tradition to another. As the same work is written and translated in two different worlds, it is most unlikely that its spirit and artistic value are retained in translation. The specimens taken in this paper pertain to Kafka's erroneous Arabic translations, and they have been found to range between strictly literal to varying degrees of adaptation and transformation, obviously depending on the translator's abilities and his attitude towards the foreign text. While some translations are source language-oriented others are target language-oriented. Also, some ethical hints have emerged from this study regarding literary translation as a career.

Keywords: Literary translation, Arabic translations, Kafka

1. Introduction:

Perhaps it is appropriate to start this study with the point made by Yazici (2004) that translations from European literature into Arabic, which have recently made a great deal of progress, offered a better knowledge of the endless treasures of these literatures to Arab readers. Of course, this does not mean that European literature is made accessible only via translation. Some Arabs know international languages and can read and appreciate literature written in these languages. One can hardly think of an educated Arab who has not been exposed to the legendary writer, William Shakespeare. Not only that, but many European writers are as celebrated in the Arabic speaking world as they are in their homeland and as widely read among Arabs as the most popular Arab writers. Nevertheless, with all its drawbacks represented in the random choice of works for translation, and the poor quality translations as will be illustrated, the role played by translation in familiarizing Arab readers with European literature is still a major one. One of the questions which the present study is endeavoring to find answer to- is how far are these translations representative of the original texts?. Of course, one does not expect a translation to be completely "faithful" to the original. Such a thing is virtually unattainable, for no two versions could possibly coincide. Exact reproduction is unfeasible, since the worlds in which the original text and its translation are made are inevitably different worlds. Adham (n.d.) puts it in a

different way. He claims that a translation may be better or worse than the original, depending on the ability and attitude of the translator, but they can never be identical. A translation may be odd and unsubstantial because the translator does not understand, fully, either of the two languages, or a qualified translator may choose to interfere with the text for the sake of producing something more appealing to his prospective readers. Having in mind Roberts and Jacobs' (2007) viewpoint that style and content cannot possibly be separated, and knowing that style is often untranslatable, one is inclined to think of perfect translation as the one that comes close to the original. This, however, does not seem to have solved the problem. Again, "come close to" is loose and cannot be circumscribed. Perhaps it is better to approach it from the other side; a translation is generally held as unfaithful if it distorts or disrupts the original writer's flow of ideas. General readers do not bother themselves with questions regarding the original language and culture of the work as long as the translation reads fluently.

According to Bassnet (1997) fidelity to the text raises as many problems as infidelity, for by refusing to deviate from the original, in certain cases, the translator escapes his primary responsibility of making the original intelligible and readable to readers of his translation. For example, some expressions do not have equivalents in the other language, some words have undertones their equivalents do not have and some words and ideas are culturally-specific. Add to this, the original writer may make awkward phrasings and ideas a faithful transmission of which would only mean the failure of the translator in the eye of his readers

In this study, some examples of erroneous Arabic translations of Franz Kafka will be displayed, discussed and evaluated in terms of any possible implications they might have in drawing a general Arab portrait of one of the twentieth century's greatest writers. One point that needs to be stressed at the onset of this study is that the prodigious efforts made and the time and attention devoted by these translators to make Kafka's works available to Arabic readers are held in the highest esteem and their worth is readily acknowledged. yet, it would be a false piety to these translators to claim that they have rendered perfect Arabic translations that would really represent Kafka's ingenuity. Having examined various notable features in the translated works, one could tentatively allege that these translations display marked disparity ranging from recognizably faithful translations to total transformations that are incomprehensible, unnatural and stilted. Since Kafka's artistic vision has been imparted to the Arabic reader mainly through translation, one cannot help but think that the image drawn to Kafka is definitely affected both ideologically and aesthetically by the quality of these available Arabic translations of his works. Generally, the reader of an Arabic text in translation is by no means concerned with the original or with comparing translations. By reading only a translated version, the reader is unable to pinpoint deviation from faithfulness to the writer's ideas and style, and any inconsistency, which actually might be caused by bad translation, is readily ascribed to the original writer.

In compiling its specimens of translation, this study does not assume that these translations should be free of mistakes. Misapprehensions that are not grave enough to distort the translation from the original are excluded as insignificant or outside the scope. Pointing out examples of unsound translation is not the only concern of the present study. Whether or not the aberration is consciously brought about by the translator is given due emphasis. Examples of faulty translation will be displayed and scrutinized as to whether inconveniences could be attributed to incompetence or to deliberate inclination presumably based on the translator's attitudes and personal preferences (some examples in which the translator consciously deviates from the spirit of the original will be provided).

In making tentative hypotheses pertaining to the evaluation of the quality of each translation, the researcher will initially rely on his intuition as a native speaker of a version of Arabic, and then reliable sources will be consulted to confirm or eliminate these hypotheses. To ensure the validity of the study's findings and claims, and avoid unresolved dispute, only the obvious mistranslations will be considered.

Extensive amounts of research, opinions, and suggestions exist regarding literary translation and the unforeseen pitfalls in the way of translators. It is of pivotal importance to bear in mind that a basic understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of literary translation and its different approaches is

indispensable for a translator. For the advantage of the present concern, let's have a glance at the following quotation which, possibly, best reflects the subtle nature of literary translation:

Everyday language differs from the language of letters in the nature of the "vision" it conveys. In everyday language, the vision is objective, and in literary language it is subjective, which means that in literary language greater importance attaches to the implications and suggestions of the words than to what actually is said. Intention has precedence over expression. The desire to be challenged, so to speak, is stronger than the search for clarity. Effectiveness is achieved in redundancy, in the aura created around the text. In literature, sense is significance" (Logos Group, 2004; online).

Building on this definition, literary translation calls for not only a mastery of vocabulary and structures, but also a thorough dexterity in discerning the implied meaning and possible interpretations of the text. Having grasped the writer's vision, the translator is left with the task of reproducing it in the other language, in a way that instigates similar response in the readers of his or her translation. Further support to this point is derived from the claim of Shemma (cited in Al Ali, 2006) that the translator should go, in his understanding of the material he wants to translate, beyond the general readers of the original who may miss the subtleties and content themselves with imprecise meaning.

In literary translation, it is not only the language that matters. Other dimensions also need careful contemplation. Hu (2006) maintains that the translation of fiction is much more complicated than that of any other genre as it deals not only with bilingual, but also bi-cultural and bi-social transference. This point is given more credibility by the claim of Lloyd (1986):

"the idea of a possible equivalence between source and translated texts implies a certain cultural transparency by which a text can be transferred from one literary and cultural system to another without loss of value" (Hu, 2006, online)

This idea of loss of value in translation results from the incompatibility of the different linguistic and cultural systems. The loss of value and the idea of the translator's discretion suggest that perfect translation of a literary text is a target no one could ever possibly accomplish.

Raleigh (1977) draws our attention to a compromise by his claim that a translator should try to get hold of the spirit and character of the author and at the same time be aware of his prospective reader's expectations. He should make the translation readable and enjoyable to the layman who may know nothing of the source language but is simply interested in the author and/or in the translated work. Relevant to this, is the claim made by Davie (1990) that there is no array of translations that can be called 'classic' as there has never been agreement about what criteria a translation should be judged by. Crystal (1996) focuses on the linguistic and cultural issues encountered in literary translation. He believes that a translation might best suit one set of circumstances and be entirely unsuitable for another."

The general picture that emerges from the above discussion is that a translator should look for what gives literature impact and try to find an analogous way of conveying the same brilliance in the intended language. Rather than transferring corresponding linguistic items, the translator should look for corresponding impact on the reader.

Deliberate encroachment on the text happens when a translator chooses to amend, add or omit in the way he thinks appropriate, i. e. a translator might be tempted to improve the work because, as Hermans (1997) states, he will be held responsible for any inconsistency. The dilemma of the translator is that readers condemn him for bad translation, and as he cannot evade responsibility if any clumsiness in his translation is the result of being faithful to the original, he might be tempted to invent an image different from the one intended by the writer for the sake of raising the quality of the literary work targeting his readers' satisfaction. Graves (1965) maintains that the translator could make small corrections, clarify reference, and abridge when boredom foreshadows but never foist new ideas on the original. He claims that the translator's first problem is to address the needs of his potential audience: What exactly do they need? Is it the literal text, or something more readable? Abdullah (2006) stresses the same point claiming that the translator has a license to reword,

add, omit, provide a footnote, or an introductory sentence, or rephrase certain pieces in order to convey the sense that the original writer wanted to show. In his study of "Farooq Guwaida's "A thousand Faces Has the Moon", Elkomi(2001:58) states that trying to be faithful to the "sense" and to the "poetic meaning" at once is never an easy job, but whenever a conflict arose, he opted for the first, as he puts it, without the least hesitation. The intended meaning, as the above point suggests, takes precedence over the form.

The above discussion roughly culminates in two types of translator, the one who, blindly, sticks to, and totally submits himself to the meaning explicitly indicated by the words and sentences of the text. Such a translator gives only the superficial meaning and often misses the point. The other is the one who gives reign to his imagination and secures to himself the full freedom of interpretation and/or reproduction. A translation of this type is probably more appealing to readers, but that will be at the expense of the writer's ideas which could be misrepresented in the process.

Abboud (1996) raises an interesting point relevant to literary translation in general, and to the present study in particular. It is about the criteria by which a certain work is chosen by a given translator. Why, for example, did Al-Baalabakki specifically translate "The Metamorphosis" in the fifties of the previous century? Is it because the translator, personally, finds the work interesting? Is it because certain writings are popular at certain circumstances and times that translating these writings could make a good business to translators? George Steiner (cited in Davie 1990) proposes that literary translation has four aspects, or proceeds through four phases. The first one is "trust" which he defines as the translator's strong belief that there is some value in the foreign text that deserves the pain s/he must take to release it. The second is "aggression" which views the translator as an invader who captures and brings home a foreign text. The third aspect is "incorporation", and it supposes that the receptor language should be stretched to accommodate perceptions not native to it or were once native but has fallen into disuse. The fourth phase is "restitution" which occurs when the translator feels guilty about what in the original he has scanted or is defeated by and makes up for that loss and sets the balance by favoring the translation with splendor not existent in the original. Accordingly, the major criterion used in the present study for evaluating how good a translation is, is how fluent it reads, and how acceptable its Arabic is. This seemingly strange method of using only one language to judge a translation is not unprecedented. Dao'an, the famous translator of the Buddhist scriptures into Chinese, had no knowledge of the source languages in which those scriptures were written and he arrived at his final translation by means of a comparative study of various Chinese versions of the same scriptures. The same method was used by Lefevere who translated the works of the poet "So Dongbo" from Chinese into English (Lefevere, 1997). With the present study the situation is much easier. Unlike that of Dao'an and Lefevere, it does not seek to translate but rather to comment on translations. The German original is provided to clarify reference especially in case of ambiguity.

2. Discussion:

An important point that could be tentatively made is that considering Kafka's background and the issue of his alleged Zionism, his works in the Arab world are mainly translated not for the sake of his original and creative mind but for the ideological visions and insights that could be drawn from them. This tendency has resulted in the artificial and plain language and structures that seem to beset many of Kafka's Arabic translations

2.1: Dissouqi Fahmi

Fahmi(1970) translated Kafka's masterpiece "Amerika". Superficially, his translation is fluent and readable, but to a discerning reader it is, in some cases at least, nonsensical and impenetrably opaque. The translator clearly lacks insight into the languages he is dealing with. Though he did not acknowledge the source of his translation, it is almost certain that he has translated from the English version of Edwin and Willa Muir as there are many examples of word for word copying. Probably it is this clear copying of the English version that represents the major defect in the Arabic translation as it alienates it further from the original and causes it to appear awkward and unrefined. To take a simple example where his translation most obviously "fails, he makes an implausible mistake in the translation of the commonly used idiomatic expression 'here,

you”(Pasley:228) which means “تفضل” or “خذ” in Arabic as “هنا أنت” (Fahmi: 229). The context is that when Brunelda, with whom Karl is watching from a distance an absurd dramatic mob procession concerning the election of a new judge in the area, offers him her glasses so that he can see more clearly. He declines the offer saying that his sight is sharp enough to see clearly without them. She would not take his word for that and immediately puts the glasses in front of his eyes saying “here, you”, obviously meaning (خذ) and not “هنا أنت”. Another equally puzzling translation is the rendering of the German statement: "Der Schubal wird mir sowieso mit der zeir Viel zu_selbstendig" Which he translates into Arabic as:

"إن شوبال، أصبح هذه الأيام، أضخم إلى حد بعيد بالنسبة لفردتي حذائه". The context is that Karl encourages, and goes with the stoker to report Schubal's oppressive behavior to the captain of the ship. The captain tells them that he knows that Schubal has grown, through time, a little more conscious of his power. The Arabic translation comes out unsubstantial, uninformative and meaningless. It has little in common with the German original, and taking them as equivalents does not make any sense. Nevertheless, it has a close proximity to the English version(Pasley,2000) which reads: Schubal is getting a good deal too big for his boots these days. The English version uses the idiomatic expression “too big for his boots”, not found in the original, to mean ‘assuming greater authority’. The wording of the original is deliberately neglected probably in favor of a rendering that might be more appealing to readers of English, though the general meaning is successfully reflected. The Arabic translation comes out clumsy as it involves the transference of a characteristically English idiomatic expression into Arabic. The result of which the phrase of : أضخم بالنسبة لفردتي حذائه -a horrible rendering indeed and a variation from an already existing variation. Translators get away with such mistakes as these because not many readers read perceptively enough to decry such horrible mistakes, and as has been mentioned earlier, very few read both the translation and the original for the purpose of evaluation, or comparison.

2.2: Ibrahim Watfi

Though Watfi describes his translation as being the natural after effect of a life-long interest in German literature in general and in Kafka in particular, his translation of Katka's “The Trial” abounds with inconsistencies that display the translator as clearly abandoning the sense and readability in favor of being faithful to the original text. To see how such tendency forfeits the text's identity, let's look at the following translation of the German text: wie hatte er doch hingenommen sein müssen von dem Aufseher Und der wachtern".

Watfi puts it in Arabic as:

كم كان لابد قد استؤثر به من قبل المفتش والخدامين: (29)

The English translation goes as:

He must have been very much taken up with the inspector and the warders (19).

The context is that being captured upon his waking from sleep with the unexpected arrest, K.'s mind is totally taken up or absorbed by the strange and unpredictable situation he finds himself in, that quite a long period of time passes in the process before his attention is drawn to the fact that these warders sent by the court to arrest him are actually subordinate employees at his bank, a nightmarish scene indeed.

Along with the above translations, it would be informative to consider Kappanyos (2006) statement that “translation is a process with a practical end; it makes available or even familiar something that is alien; something that is behind ones linguistic barrier”. In the light of this point, one could easily discard the above translation as useless. The Arabic translation is not making any thing “available” or “familiar”. It is a rendering one could sarcastically call “Kafkaesque” and is probably as obscure to the Arabic monolingual reader as the German and the English versions. It is unsubstantial and ambiguous both syntactically and semantically. Syntactically, "كم كان لابد قد" is an oddly made structure whose meaning is most unfathomable and is not expected to occur even with average Arabic readers. Clumsy and erroneous as it is, one could not miss two possible hints both of which are irrelevant and completely out of question. The use of the word “كم” is suggestive of repeatedness and/or frequency . The scene of arrest and initial cross-examination has taken

place once so far in the development of the story. Therefore, it does not make sense to use the Arabic word "كم" here. The German word "wie" is better translated as "كيف" and here the tone is exclamatory.

"استؤثر به", as construed from the context, should be a bad translation for "has been absorbed". After the first moments of disbelief, grotesque and total rejection, K. is gradually reconciling himself to the new situation which necessitates that he should deal sagaciously with the warders. They become so familiar with one another that the sense of hostility and anger is gradually fading away giving way to friendly talks and cool discussions. Only at this stage, does K. concentrate on the men he is talking with. Perhaps "أخذ- مبني للمجهول- بما" is probably more appropriate. The active voice expression in Arabic "استأثر به" means "favor oneself with some interest" but in the above translation it is haphazardly used. The intended meaning as dictated by the logic of the situation could not be anything other than "he has been taken up with. The arbitrariness of the Arabic translation represented in the wrong choice of structures and vocabulary is possibly induced by either misreading in the original or miswriting in the receptor language. It is this capricious rendering that causes the translation to appear unnatural and contrived.

Admittedly, vocabulary is the most troublesome aspect in literary translation for, unlike the limited and clearly defined syntactic and grammatical structures, the translator has to look for the fine semantic differences that cause one word to be the most appropriate equivalent from amongst a whole range of variables that may seem to be perfectly interchangeable. Really irksome, are the cases in which a single word has different senses each suits a situation or a level of usage slightly different from the others. The appropriateness of a certain word for a certain situation is decided mainly by the context in which it occurs. Look at the following translation and pay special attention to the Arabic translation of the word "sensible" *Sic wollen einen Sinn und jilhren dieses Sinnloseste auf das es gibt?*

In the Arabic rendering, it comes out as:

تريدون مني معنى وتقومون بما لا أقل منه معنى في العالم (26)

While in the English version, it is:

"You ask me to be sensible and you do the most insensible thing in the world" (16)

The context is that when K. fails to have a grasp of reality about the nature of his guilt from the warders, he asks for permission to call his friend Hasterer (a lawyer). To this, one of the warders interferes giving him a piece of his mind. He tells him that he considers the whole matter a purely personal affair, and to spread it to the public is the most unwise thing he would think of doing. For K., there is a clear paradox in the advice they are giving him. They ask him to be sensible while they are carrying out the most insensible thing in the world (arresting him without a crime). Interesting is the rendering of the German word "Sinn", meaning 'useful' or 'sensible' as "معنى" in the Arabic translation. The Arabic word "معنى" is confusing as it could equally purports 'meaning' 'significance and 'sense'. in the present context, meaning' is definitely ruled out as the encounter between K. and the warders does not involve explaining concepts especially from the part of the narrator. The other two possibilities are equally plausible. Do the warders ask him to be logical? Or do they want him to do something more useful for his case? In other words: are they asking for a 'justified' or an 'advantageous' behavior? The two meanings are not very different, yet, leaning towards one will actually change the meaning, though slightly. A better translation should be:

"تريدون مني تصرفا معقولا وتتصرفون بطريقة أبعد ما تكون عن المعقولية"

The word "معنى" is not the appropriate equivalent for the German 'Sinn' in this context. Watfi seems to have adhered to the literal meaning of the words. Such tendency is criticized by Yeats (1982:248) who claims that much of the deeper meaning lies in linguistic effects- antithesis, extravagant hyperboles, wordplay- which are more important than surface meaning.

Particularly interesting are the translation mistakes in the transference of culturally-specific allusions. In one of the scenes of "Amerika"- one of Kafka's novels, the stocker says:

"und heir auf diesem kasten wo alles nach der Schnur eingerichtet ist, wo kein Witz"

Watfi gives it in Arabic as:

(" وعلى هذه السفينة العتيقة، حيث كل شيء منظم على الصراط المستقيم، وحيث لا تطلب نكتة " 25)

The English:

"and here where everything is done by rule, and you don't need any wit at all" (17)

The context is that the stoker is complaining to Karl Rossman about the bad treatment he receives from his superior, Schubal. He tells him that he has worked in many ships before, and under many supervisors and everywhere he worked, he was praised by his superiors, and now that he has joined this ship where everything runs smoothly according to rules and regulations, and that one does not need to be smart to do his job, he does not understand why Schubal considers him unavailing and good for nothing. The Arabic translation can easily be discarded as horrible as it contains two major problems. The Arabic expression "الصراط المستقيم" is alien to the original and most probably to Kafka himself. It is made up by the translator as an equivalent to the German "schnur" which literally translates as "law". The expression "الصراط المستقيم" is Islamic and has a strong religious connotation and using it in this context suggests to the reader that the stoker is a committed Muslim. Also the wrong choice of word meaning is apparent in the translation of the German word "witz" as "نكتة". Other meanings of the same word include "ذكاء", "فطنة", "عقل", and "عقل". The stoker is stating that his job does not need any special abilities or talent. Nobody would imagine a job that does not need "a joke" or "kidding". It is just that the translator has chosen the unwanted word. Two points arise from the above translation, first, nothing in the story hints to a religious character, leave alone a committed Muslim, and second, such point might have a far-reaching effect because many, as has been pointed in a number of studies, see in Kafka a religious thinker rather than a fiction writer. The only justification one could think of for this clear deviation from the spirit of the original is that the translator is clearly favoring readability as he is translating for a predominantly Muslim Arab audience. A point that literary translators need to be conscious of, is that the original writer's perspective should be retained and the peculiarities of the literary work should be preserved in the best way possible. Perhaps the most excellent example to be thought of here is the comment made by Hassan (2001) on the personality of Katka's father describing him as ruthless and unrelenting not only in the way he treated his family but also in the way he acted towards those who worked for him. On one occasion, according to Hassan (ibid), Katka's father talked of "the mess left by the deceased". Particularly interesting is that he translates the Word deceased as "المرحومة". "المرحومة" which literally translates as "the may god have mercy on her soul" is an exclusively Islamic word and to assign it to Kafka is definitely to ascribe Islam to him. The reader cannot avoid associating it to Islam or at least to religion. To avoid such inappropriate connection, he should have used a more neutral word like "الراحلة".

Relying on the above examples, one could hardly call Watfi's translation "great". He seems to lack good insight into Arabic, and his ability in German is beyond the scope of the present study. His translation is generally more literal, less literary and monotonous. It is worth mentioning here that Watfi had lived for about thirty years in Germany by the time he started his ambitious project on Kafka. He is supposed to have a good grasp of the German language and the cultural atmosphere, at least similar to the one in which Kafka's works were produced, but for the same reason, he might have alienated himself from Arabic language, culture and traditions. In this connection, one cannot help but wonders whether these mistakes have been committed as a result of misreading in the German original as well as the obvious miswriting in the Arabic language.

2.3: Kamil Yousef Hussein

As has been stated earlier in this study, the translator's dilemma is that he has to choose between whether to be faithful to the original, or to create a well-formed text according to the literary traditions of the target language. According to Kappanyos (2006 :181), "well-formedness" is preferred by those translating into their mother tongue "homeward" rather than from their mother tongue "away from home". This point is in harmony with Farhat's (1982) claim that Arab translators respect their language very much that when they translate, they try to change the form to one that is more compatible to Arabic traditions. He gives the example that Tanious Abdu, who translated the works of Alexander Domase, kept the content but changed the

form that his translations are more of Arabic literary conventions. The same is true about the translation of Hafiz Ibrahim to Hugo's "The Miserables". In concordance with that, and opposite to Watfi, who has sacrificed the liveliness and wit of the text to a faithful but unimaginative reproduction, is the tendency to give only the general meaning and create images that are different from, yet analogous, to the ones in the original text. This inclination is represented by the work of Hussein (1996) who translated Katka's short story "Jackals and Arabs". His version is praiseworthy for its fluency and readability. It reads like an Arabic story. He tends to, deliberately; break away from the sense of the literary work in favor of an Arabic narrative style which he probably thinks will be more appealing to his Arabic readers. According to Elkomi (2001), a writer cannot hope to sound genuinely Arabic without invoking the literary tradition and with it the traditional modes of thoughts that belong to the common Arabic legacy. For instance, Hussein uses expressions that are distinctively Arabic. Consider his translation of the German word: "bereitle" as: (قاب قوسين أو أدنى) The German word "bereitle" literally translates as "already prepared". In Pasley's translation it is "lying ready" (167). The context is that the narrator, a European wanderer in the Arabian Desert suddenly finds himself surrounded by a howling herd of jackals. He has forgotten to light the pile of firewood lying ready to keep the jackals off with its smoke. For lying ready, which refers to the firewood, the Arabic translator is using a distinctively Arabic idiom قاب قوسين أو أدنى" roughly meaning "very close". Stylistically, it is most unlikely that Kafka wanted to evoke in his readers' mind the image of an arrow being used as a distance measuring tool. This image is definitely "too Arabic". Also the context gives more weight to the availability of the firewood than to its nearness. Probably, the translator is consciously adding some Arabic flavor to the translation, and that deviates it further from the original. It is true that the translator is addressing Arab readers but honesty requires, as he is not the writer of the story, that he reflects only the meaning and images intended by the writer.

2.4: Al-Baalabakki, Fayyadh, Abboud, Fahmi, Watfi, and Masu'd:

Abboud(1996) claims that most of the Arabic translations of Kafka are faulty, infidel to author's texts and consequently, unrepresentative of Kafka's artistic visions. Mistakes according to him are semantic, syntactic and stylistic. He displays a number of translations for a number of Kafka's stories by Arab translators. By comparing these translations to the original text in German, he points out where each of them fails. To take just one of his examples, Al Baalabakki and Fayyadh translated the story "The Metamorphosis" into Arabic. The beginning of the third scene in the two versions reads as follows:

The German:

Die schwere Verwundung Gregors, an der er tiber einen Monat litt - der Apfel blieb, da ihn niemand zu entfernen wagte, als sichtbares Andenken im Fleische sitzen - , schien selbst den Vater daran erinnert zu haben. daB Gregor trotz seiner gegenwärtigen traurigen und ekelhaften Gestalt ein Familienmitglied war. das man nicht wie einen Feind behandeln durfte. sondern dem gegentiber es das Gebot der Familienpflicht war, den Widerwillen hinunterzuschlucken und zu dulden. nichts als zu dulden.

Al-Baalabakki translates the same text as:

"إن الأذى الذي لحق بقريقر -الذي أوهنه خلال شهر أو يزيد- فقد ظلت التفاحة ملتصقة بجسده مثل مذكر منظور، إذ لم يحاول أحد انتزاعها - نقول أن هذا الذي وكأنه جعله أباه نفسه يتذكر إن قريقر كان واحداً من أفراد الأسرة ، على الرغم من شكله الحالي البائس الكريه، وأنه لا يجب أن يعامل معاملة عدو وأن الواجد العائلي يقتضي-على عكس ذلك- كبت الاشمئزاز واصطناع الصبر والتحمل، ولا شيء غير الصبر والتحمل" (95)

And Fayyadh puts it as:

"بدا أن جرح جريجور الخطير، الذي عانى منه أكثر من شهر، - ظلت التفاحة مطمورة في لحمه كذكرى مرئية- إذ لم يجرؤ أحد على إزالتها، ذكر حتى والده أن جريجور كان فرداً من العائلة، والذي لا يمكن التعامل معه كعدو، رغم شكله الحالي المنفر والمثير للشفقة، إذ على العكس، كان واجب العائلة يأمر أن يتعلموا تقززهم ويتحملوه، يتحملوه لا شيء أكثر" (96)

Before making any comments on the above translations, Abboud gives a model translation:

"إن جرح غريغور البليغ، الذي عانى منه ما يربو على شهر، فالتفاحة ظلت في لحمه كتذكّار مرئي لأن أحدا لم يجزؤ على انتزاعها، قد ذكر حتى الأب نفسه، على ما يبدو بأن غريغور كان، برغم حالته الحالية الحزينة المقرفة، من الذين لا يجوز أن يعاملهم المرء كأعداء، بل خلافا لذلك فإن الواجب العائلي يقتضي أن يتطلع اشمنزازه وأن يتحمل، لا شيء غير أن يتحمل" (96)

According to him, Al-Baalabakki's translation contains the following mistakes: he wrongly replaces the word (wound) with (harm) and he uses (enfeebled) instead of (suffered) The apple (stuck to) with his body instead of (remained) in his flesh. Nobody (risks) instead of nobody (dares). Gregor's shape is (miserable and ugly) instead of (sad and disgusting), disgust should be (repressed) not (swallowed) as it is in Al-Baalabakki's translation. As Abboud believes, this translation, despite the fact that it contains a number of mistakes, is generally acceptable, especially when one knows that it has been translated from a medium language (English). As for the other translation by Fayyadh, Abboud points out the following observations; Fayyadh describes the wound as (dangerous) instead of (serious), the apple is (hidden) in Gregor's flesh instead of (remained) in his flesh, Gregor's shape is (repelling and pitiful) instead of (sad and disgusting), and he (cannot) be treated instead of he (should not) be treated as an enemy. Regarding the evaluation of this translation, Abboud thinks that it is worse than Al-Baalabakki's. Moreover, the translator did not mention the language from which he translated the text, though, to Abboud, the quality of the translation stands as an evidence supporting the claim that he translated from a medium language. The appearance of the title in German together with the Arabic one might suggest to readers that he translated directly from the German language. Regarding this point, Abboud calls for moral and decent translators who, first of all, state and acknowledge the source they have used and the language from which they have translated. To further elaborate this point of Abboud, the present study brings another version of translation that is different from all the three above. Fahmi (2004) translated the same story "The Metamorphosis" and the same paragraph in his translation reads:

"بدأت الإصابة الخطيرة التي أصابت جريجور، والتي أقعدته عن الحركة لأكثر من شهر، فقد كانت التفاحة قد انغرست في جسمه كذكرى مرئية، طالما أن أحدا لم يغامر بإزالتها، وكأنها قد دفعت حتى والده نفسه إلى أن يتذكر أن جريجور كان واحدا من أفراد الأسرة، على الرغم من تعاسته الراهنة وهيئته البشعة، ولا تجب معاملته كأنه عدو، وأن واجب الأسرة على العكس من ذلك يقتضيها نبذ القرف ومعالجة الصبر، ولا شيء غير الصبر" (62)

Matching Fahmi's translation against that of Abboud, the two translations differ significantly. In Fahmi's translation, the (serious wound) becomes (dangerous injury), (suffered) becomes (confined to bed), (no one dares) in Abboud's translation is (no body risks) in Fahmi's translation. While Abboud puts it as (swallow disgust), Fahmi translates the same expression as (forsake disgust). The use of the Arabic equivalent (يقتضيها) lends itself as a morphological deviation. He could have used "يقتضي".

From the four translations displayed above, no two translators seem to have any remarkable degree of coincidence in their translations. This could be due to translating from a mediatory language but, at least to some extent, it also shows the idiosyncrasy of each translator in sensing the meaning.

This leaves us with the question: Does Kafka's works have more than one version even in the German language? The answer is definitely no.

3. Conclusion

A good translation is the one that endeavors to get as close as possible to the spirit of the original and at the same time be molded in the idiom and literary conventions of the target language. The two mutually exclusive commitments of faithfulness to the original and readability in the intended language should be reconciled through assuming a position somewhere in the middle. Disregard of faithfulness to the original is a kind of adulteration that is ethically condemned while sticking blindly to literal translation leads to stylistic and aesthetic impoverishment which does not do the author any justice. The present study has differentiated between major and minor mistranslations depending on how each affects, mildly or severely. The literary image they are used in connection with. An example of a major mistake in translation is that of Fahmi to the English expression 'here, you', as "هنا أنت", while the logic of the situation dictates that it should be (خذ أو

تفضل). F. An inconsequential mistake is probably, best reflected in the choice of synonyms like "risk" and "dares", "stuck to" and "remained".

As has been pointed out, the specimens taken in this study have been found to range between strictly literal to varying degrees of adaptation and transformation, obviously depending on the translator's abilities and his attitude towards the foreign text. While some translations are source language-oriented others are target language-oriented. Finally, some ethical hints have emerged from this study regarding literary translation as a career. With the notion that the readers of a translation generally take for granted what the translator gives them, honesty requires that a translator should free himself of any prejudice to or against the work he is translating. He should state in a preliminary remark the language he is translating from, and how he intends to translate — whether the translation will be "homeward" or "away from home".

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