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Foreignization, Domestication, and the Translation of Gendered Meaning in Raja'a Alem's The Dove's Necklace

Baleid Taha Shamsan ^a , Afaf Alwan ^a , Mohammed Hamoud Ghannam ^a

^a Department of English, Faculty of Administrative and Human Sciences, University of Science and Technology, Aden-Yemen.

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Corresponding author's:

Baleid Taha Shamsan, Department of English,
Faculty of Administrative and Human Sciences,
University of Science and Technology, Aden-Yemen.
Email: b.taha@ust.edu

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how domestication and foreignization reshape gendered meanings in the English translation of *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja'a Alem. Although the novel has received considerable feminist and cultural attention for its representation of women's bodies, silence, and agency within Saudi society, limited scholarship has explored how translation mediates these gendered meanings across languages. Drawing on Lawrence Venuti's framework of domestication and foreignization alongside feminist translation theory, the study employs a qualitative comparative analysis of 14 gender-sensitive Arabic-English excerpts. The analysis examines how translational choices reshape representations of female corporeality, desire, silence, honor, and agency at lexical and discursive levels. The findings suggest that domestication intensifies individualized sensual representation. By contrast, foreignization more frequently preserves metaphorical interiority, honor-based silence, and symbolic forms of gender discourse. Importantly, the study demonstrates that translation strategies operate unevenly across different dimensions of gender discourse rather than producing a uniform ideological shift. By integrating translation strategy with feminist literary analysis, the study contributes to translation studies by showing how translation functions as a process of cultural reconfiguration through which gendered meanings are selectively reshaped, preserved, or relocated across linguistic and cultural contexts.

KEYWORD: domestication and foreignization; gender discourse; Arabic-English literary translation; Raja'a Alem

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Doi :

تتناول هذه الدراسة كيف يُعيد التوطين والتغريب تشكيل المعاني الجندرية في الترجمة الإنجليزية لرواية "قلادة الحمامة" لرجاء عالم. على الرغم من أن الرواية حظيت باهتمام كبير من الأوساط النسوية والثقافية لما تقدمه من تصوير لأجساد النساء وصمتهن ودورهن في المجتمع السعودي، إلا أن الدراسات التي تناولت كيفية تأثير الترجمة على هذه المعاني الجندرية عبر اللغات لا تزال محدودة. بالاستناد إلى إطار لورانس فينوتي للتوطين والتغريب، إلى جانب نظرية الترجمة النسوية، تستخدم الدراسة تحليلاً نوعياً مقارناً لأربعة عشر مقتطفاً من العربية إلى الإنجليزية، مع مراعاة حساسية النوع الاجتماعي. يدرس التحليل كيف تُعيد الخيارات الترجمانية تشكيل تمثيلات الجسد الأنثوي والرغبة والصمت والشرف والدور على المستويين المعجمي والخطابي. تشير النتائج إلى أن التوطين يُعزز التمثيل الحسي الفردي. في المقابل، يُحافظ التغريب في أغلب الأحيان على البعد الداخلي المجازي، والصمت القائم على الشرف، والأشكال الرمزية للخطاب الجندري. الأهم من ذلك، تُظهر الدراسة أن استراتيجيات الترجمة تعمل بشكل غير متساوٍ عبر مختلف أبعاد الخطاب الجندري، بدلاً من إحداث تحول أيديولوجي موحد. ومن خلال دمج استراتيجيات الترجمة مع التحليل الأدبي النسوي، تُسهّم الدراسة في دراسات الترجمة بتوضيح كيف تعمل الترجمة كعملية لإعادة تشكيل ثقافي، يتم من خلالها إعادة صياغة المعاني الجندرية أو الحفاظ عليها أو نقلها بشكل انتقائي عبر السياقات اللغوية والثقافية.

المفتاحية: الترجمة الأدبية من العربية إلى الإنجليزية؛ رجاء عالم؛ الكلمات المفتاحية

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Dove's Necklace by Raja'a Alem is a contemporary Saudi novel first published in Arabic in 2010 and awarded the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2011[1]. Set in Mecca, the novel blends crime fiction with social critique, polyphonic narration, and symbolic realism, positioning the city itself as an active narrative presence rather than a neutral backdrop. The narrative opens with the discovery of a young woman's naked body in a narrow alley—an event that exposes deeply rooted social anxieties, moral silences, and power structures governing gender relations in a rapidly transforming Saudi society [2].

Gender roles, female identity, and the regulation of women's bodies constitute the novel's central thematic concerns. Feminist and cultural critics have consistently shown that The Dove's Necklace foregrounds women's marginalization, restricted agency, and enforced silence within intersecting systems of honor, religion, and patriarchy [3,4]. Studies published in venues such as the Middle East Critique and Social Journal further emphasize that the novel does not merely portray women as passive victims but exposes the mechanisms through which social structures discipline female bodies and voices, particularly in public space (MECSJ, n.d.). Despite this growing body of scholarship, existing studies focus primarily on what gendered meanings are represented in the Arabic text, paying limited attention to how these meanings are reshaped when the novel is translated for a global readership.

Translation, however, operates not merely as a linguistic act but as a culturally situated practice that actively reshapes meaning. As Venuti (1995) argues, translation strategies such as domestication and foreignization are ideological choices that determine whether cultural difference is assimilated into target-culture norms or deliberately preserved [5]. Feminist translation scholars further note that gendered discourse is particularly vulnerable to ideological transformation in translation, as decisions concerning body, voice, and silence can either reinforce or destabilize dominant gender ideologies [6,7]. The English translation of The Dove's Necklace therefore provides a critical site for examining the intersection of gender and translation strategy, revealing translation as a process of cultural reconfiguration rather than mere linguistic transfer.

A clear example of domestication appears in the depiction of the murdered woman's body:

"الرائحة نفسها التي فاحت من جسد اخته فاطمة الملفوف في بياض الاكفان، في تجريد البياض لم يظهر من جسد فاطمة غير نفرة الثديين تحفران في وعيه" (17)

This is rendered into English as "Denuded by that white shroud, all that could be seen of her body was the protrusion of her breasts, which bore into Nasser's consciousness."

Despite its lexical accuracy, the English translation foregrounds visual corporeality in a manner consistent with Western realist narrative conventions. In the Arabic cultural context, the exposed female body functions primarily as a symbol of collective shame and social paralysis, explaining why no one dares to claim the corpse. The domesticated translation subtly shifts emphasis from communal moral crisis to individualized bodily spectacle, thereby reconfiguring the gendered meaning of exposure and silence.

By contrast, moments of foreignization preserve culturally specific gendered logic without explanatory adaptation. This is evident in the scene where authorities ask whether anyone is related to the deceased: "هل منكم من يعلن قرابته للجثة" (16)

which is translated into English as "Is anyone here related to the deceased?"

The translation here retains the silence that follows, offering no cultural gloss to explain why no one responds. This foreignizing strategy preserves the honor-based gender norms governing women's bodies after death, compelling the target reader to confront an unfamiliar social mechanism rather than assimilating it into familiar emotional or legal frameworks [5].

A further example of foreignization appears in the portrayal of Aunt Etra's sexual authority:

"كانت مشهورة كالحية التي توسعها ان تشل رجل بنظرة" (17).

which is rendered into "She was famous for her snake-like ability to paralyze a man with a single look." Here, the translation preserves the mythic and culturally charged metaphor of female power rather than neutralizing it through psychological explanation. By retaining this disruptive image, the

translator foreignizes female sexuality as a destabilizing force within patriarchal culture, aligning with feminist calls to preserve resistant gender meanings in translation [7].

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that domestication and foreignization operate unevenly but decisively in the English translation of *The Dove's Necklace*. Domestication tends to individualize and aestheticize female bodies, while foreignization preserves honor-based silences and culturally specific constructions of female power. This study therefore argues that translation strategies do not merely affect readability or style but actively participate in the cultural renegotiation of gender discourse, shaping how female bodies, silence, and agency are understood beyond their original sociocultural context.

1.1. Research Problem

Although *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja'a Alem has been extensively studied from feminist, cultural, and sociopolitical perspectives, existing scholarship has largely treated gender representation and translation as separate analytical domains. Studies on gender examine how women's bodies, identities, and silences are constructed within Saudi cultural contexts, whereas translation studies often focus on linguistic equivalence, style, or narrative voice without substantially addressing gendered discourse. As a result, there is a critical lack of research on how translation strategies—specifically domestication and foreignization—reshape gendered meanings in the English translation of the novel. This gap obscures the role of translation as an active cultural practice that participates in the reconfiguration of gender discourse for global readerships. Existing scholarship has rarely examined how translation strategies interact unevenly with different dimensions of gender discourse within Arabic literary translation, particularly in relation to corporeality, silence, and female agency.

1.2. Research Questions

- ❖ How are domestication and foreignization employed in the English translation of *The Dove's Necklace* when rendering gender-related discourse?
- ❖ In what ways do these translation strategies reshape representations of female bodies, silence, and agency in the target text?
- ❖ How does the use of domestication versus foreignization affect the transmission of culturally specific gender norms to the English-speaking readership?

1.3. Significance of the Study

This study is significant on both theoretical and practical levels. Theoretically, it contributes to translation studies by extending Venuti's domestication–foreignization framework into feminist literary analysis, demonstrating how translation strategies actively participate in the construction of gendered meaning. It also enriches feminist translation studies by foregrounding Arabic–English literary translation as a critical site where gender, culture, and ideology intersect.

Practically, the study offers insights for literary translators, scholars, and students by highlighting how translational decisions influence the global reception of gendered narratives from culturally specific contexts. By focusing on a prominent Saudi novel translated into English, the research deepens cross-cultural understanding of how women's bodies, silence, and agency are negotiated in translation, thus contributing to broader discussions on cultural representation, ethical translation practices, and gender-sensitive translation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Domestication and Foreignization: Contemporary Perspectives

The foundational dichotomy of domestication and foreignization remains central to analyzing translation as cultural practice. Venuti's seminal work posits that domestication prioritizes fluency and assimilation to target-culture norms, often at the expense of cultural specificity, whereas foreignization retains source cultural markers, resisting cultural homogenization [5]. Building on this framework, recent scholarship continues to affirm the relevance and expansion of these concepts. An's bibliometric analysis of translation studies find dramatic growth in research on both strategies,

highlighting a trend toward nuanced examinations that span literary, educational, and intercultural domains, including culturally sensitive topics such as gender and identity [9].

Despite this renewed attention, most research remains theoretical or focused on general translation processes, with relatively few studies applying domestication/foreignization specifically to gendered discourse in literary translation. This gap reinforces the need to investigate how these strategies shape gender representations in translated narratives such as *The Dove's Necklace*.

2.2. Gender and Translation: Emerging Empirical Work

Recent scholarship has expanded the study of gender in translation beyond early feminist theory toward empirical and intersectional approaches. A 2025 study on translator gender and ideology demonstrates that translator subjectivity can shape tone, stylistic nuance, and representation, supporting feminist arguments about translator agency in cultural negotiation. Within Arabic–English literary translation, this intersection between Lawrence Venuti's foreignization and feminist translation theory is particularly significant. Preserving culturally specific forms of female silence, honor, embodiment, and agency may function not only as cultural resistance, but also as a feminist intervention that prevents Saudi women's experiences from being assimilated into dominant Western interpretive frameworks.

Systematic reviews further indicate that gender and translation remain an expanding but underdeveloped field, with growing attention to stereotype negotiation, gendered representation, and cultural conventions in translated texts (Wang et al., 2025). Similarly, intersectional feminist translation studies emphasize the interaction between gender, power, and coloniality in translation practices, advocating the preservation of cultural specificity alongside resistance to narrative inequality [9].

Recent feminist translation scholarship also highlights the political and activist dimensions of translation [10] argues that translators and publishers should actively engage with gender and cultural bias in literary circulation and editorial practice. In parallel [13] demonstrates how translated Western literature has contributed to the emergence of hybrid literary forms in Saudi fiction, enabling writers such as Raja'a Alem to incorporate themes of gender, identity, and social critique into local literary discourse.

2.3. Translation and Gendered Narrative in Practice

While general gender and translation research has expanded, literary case studies that tightly integrate translation strategy with gendered meaning remain scarce. Analyses focused on *The Dove's Necklace* have tended to address translation quality and fidelity but without systematically examining how specific strategies affect gendered representation.

Critics of the English translation have noted that linguistic choices can subtly alter narrative emphasis and cultural meaning, though such critiques stop short of strategy classification or gendered impact analysis. This reinforces the importance of studies that combine theoretical frameworks (Venuti; Simon; Flotow) with concrete textual comparison in order to reveal how translation choices reformulate gender discourse for target audiences.

The field of gender and translation at large, including interdisciplinary work on gender bias in machine translation, also highlights relevant trends in how translation technologies and human translators negotiate gender identities and linguistic representation — though these studies focus more on gender bias detection and mitigation than on literary narrative transformation.

2.4. Synthesis and Research Gap

Recent scholarship confirms the continuing importance of Lawrence Venuti's domestication and foreignization framework in translation studies. An's (2024) bibliometric review shows increasing use of these strategies in culturally sensitive fields such as literary translation, identity, and ideology, reinforcing the view that translation strategies are culturally and ideologically consequential rather

than neutral techniques [9]. At the same time, research on gender and translation has expanded through empirical and systematic approaches [11] and recent 2025 systematic reviews highlight growing attention to gendered discourse, stereotype negotiation, and cultural norms, though much of the scholarship remains descriptive or fragmented across disciplines.

Intersectional feminist translation studies further emphasize the relationship between gender, culture, power, and language [9] advocates decolonial and intersectional frameworks, whereas Helena Vassallo (2023) [10] stresses feminist translator activism and resistance to cultural erasure. These perspectives conceptualize translation as a site where gendered meanings are actively negotiated rather than passively transferred, particularly in non-Western contexts shaped by honor, shame, and social regulation.

Despite these developments, few studies systematically examine how specific translation strategies reshape gendered meanings in Arabic–English literary translation. Existing scholarship on *The Dove's Necklace* has largely focused either on feminist readings of the Arabic text or on general evaluations of the English translation without integrating translation strategy and gender discourse into a unified framework. Consequently, the role of translation as a process of cultural reconfiguration of gender remains underexplored.

Addressing this gap, the present study combines translation theory with feminist criticism to examine how domestication and foreignization reshape representations of female corporeality, silence, and agency in the English translation of *The Dove's Necklace*. Adopting a qualitative, text-centered approach, the study investigates how translational choices actively reconstruct gendered meaning for a global readership rather than merely transferring it across languages.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Corpus

The corpus of this study consists of selected excerpts from *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja'a Alem in its original Arabic version (2010) and its authorized English translation (Alem, 2016), published by Overlook Press. The study adopts a qualitative, purposive sampling approach, as its objective is to examine the cultural and ideological reconfiguration of gendered meaning rather than to achieve statistical representativeness.

The corpus was constructed through a purposive sampling procedure designed to identify passages where gendered meaning was both narratively central and linguistically salient. Initial screening involved a complete close reading of the Arabic novel, during which potentially relevant passages were marked and categorized according to recurring thematic patterns. Passages were then evaluated based on four inclusion criteria: (1) explicit or implicit representation of female corporeality, (2) presence of gendered silence or social regulation, (3) references to honor- or shame-based cultural logic, and (4) representations of female desire, agency, or authority. Only excerpts meeting at least one of these criteria and containing substantial translational variation between source and target texts were retained for analysis.

A total of 14 excerpts were identified through close reading of the Arabic source text and selected for detailed analysis based on predefined inclusion criteria. Passages were included if they contained explicit or implicit representations of:

- female corporeality (e.g., bodily exposure and sensuality)
- gendered silence and social regulation
- honor- and shame-based cultural norms
- female agency, desire, or authority

These categories are informed by feminist literary analyses of the novel and broader scholarship on gender in Arabic narrative discourse.

The selected excerpts include key narrative moments such as the discovery of the female corpse, scenes depicting bodily exposure and surveillance, and extended passages centered on Aisha and the Turkish fashion designer. These passages are particularly suitable for examining translation strategy because they combine culturally embedded gender norms with dense figurative and ideologically loaded language.

All Arabic excerpts were systematically aligned with their English counterparts to form a parallel Arabic–English mini-corpus. Alignment was conducted manually at the sentence and clause level to ensure semantic correspondence and analytical precision. Each pair of excerpts was then analyzed comparatively at the lexical, syntactic, and discursive levels.

All examples discussed in this study are drawn directly from this aligned corpus. The selection is therefore criterion-based and theory-driven, enabling a focused investigation of how translation strategies operate in contexts where gendered meaning is most ideologically salient. While limited in size, the corpus is sufficient for qualitative discourse analysis, where analytical depth is prioritized over quantitative breadth. The selection of 14 excerpts is methodologically consistent with qualitative translation and discourse studies that prioritize interpretive depth over numerical representativeness. The corpus size was determined through thematic saturation, whereby additional passages no longer produced substantially new patterns regarding the interaction between translation strategy and gendered meaning. Since the study focuses on ideologically dense and culturally salient passages, a smaller purposive corpus allows for detailed lexical, syntactic, and discursive analysis that would not be achievable through large-scale quantitative sampling.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This study adopts an integrated theoretical framework combining **Venuti's domestication–foreignization model** (Venuti, 1995) with **feminist translation theory** [5,6,7]. Venuti's model provides the primary analytical lens for identifying translation strategies, distinguishing between domestication—where cultural difference is assimilated into target-culture norms—and foreignization—where source-culture specificity and ideological tension are preserved.

Feminist translation theory supplements this framework by foregrounding gender as a key site of ideological negotiation in translation. Feminist scholars argue that translation choices related to bodily description, sexuality, silence, and metaphor are culturally and politically charged, shaping how female agency and power are perceived in the target culture [6]. Further emphasizes that preserving disruptive representations of female desire and authority is crucial for resisting patriarchal normalization in translation [7]. Together, these frameworks allow the analysis to move beyond equivalence toward examining translation as a **cultural practice that actively reconfigures gender discourse**.

The interaction between translation strategies and gendered meaning is conceptualized in **Figure 1**, which integrates the perspectives of Venuti (1995), Simon (1996), and Flotow (1997) into a unified analytical framework.

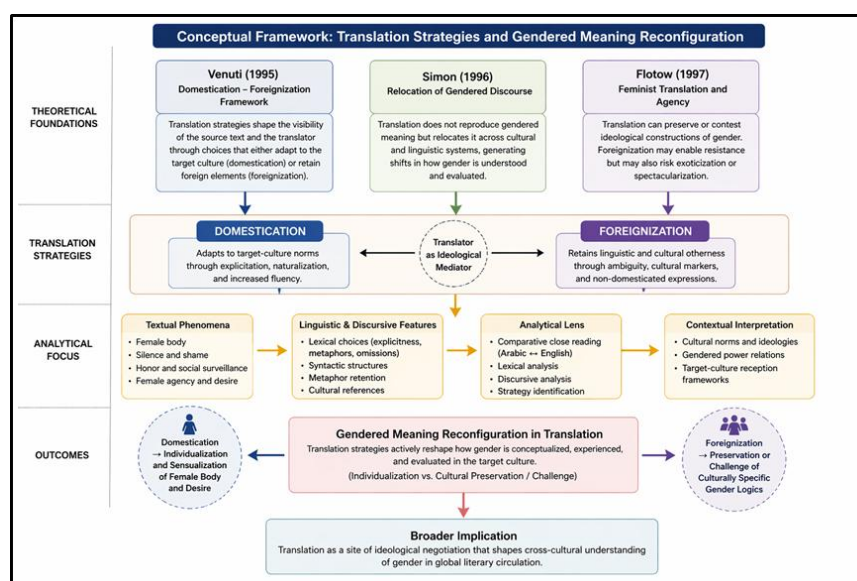


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of translation strategies and gendered meaning reconfiguration.

The diagram illustrates the interaction between domestication and foreignization (Venuti, 1995), the relocation of gendered discourse (Simon, 1996), and the negotiation of female agency and ideological risk (Flotow, 1997), showing how translation strategies reshape gendered meaning across cultural contexts.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the analytical framework positions the translator as a mediating agent whose strategic choices at the lexical and discursive levels generate shifts in the representation of female bodies, silence, and agency, ultimately contributing to the reconfiguration of gendered meaning in the target context.

3.2. Analytical Procedure

The analysis follows a qualitative comparative design structured around a systematic multi-stage procedure. The analytical process was developed to ensure transparency and consistency in identifying, classifying, and interpreting translation strategies in relation to gendered meaning. Each stage involved predefined analytical criteria and progressively narrowed the focus from corpus identification to ideological interpretation.

Stage 1: Identification and Coding of Gender-Sensitive Passages

The first stage involved identifying gender-sensitive excerpts within the Arabic source text of *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja'a Alem through close reading and thematic coding. Passages were selected based on the inclusion criteria outlined in Section 3.1, specifically those containing explicit or implicit representations of female corporeality, sexual desire, honor-based restriction, public exposure, and female authority.

Each excerpt was coded according to its dominant gendered theme (e.g., bodily exposure, silence, agency), allowing for structured comparison across the dataset. This coding framework was informed by feminist literary criticism on the novel and broader studies of gender in Arabic literary discourse.

To enhance analytical reliability, the coding process followed predefined thematic and strategic criteria derived from the theoretical framework. Each excerpt was examined multiple times to ensure consistency in categorization, and coding decisions were cross-checked against the operational indicators of domestication and foreignization established in Section 3.3. Ambiguous cases were resolved through comparative contextual analysis of both the Arabic source text and the English translation in order to minimize impressionistic interpretation.

Stage 2: Comparative Translation Analysis and Strategy Classification

In the second stage, each of the 14 selected Arabic excerpts was systematically aligned with its English translation to form paired analytical units. These units were examined comparatively at three levels:

- ❖ Lexical level (word choice, semantic shifts, connotation)
- ❖ Syntactic level (sentence structure, grammatical transformations)
- ❖ Discursive level (metaphor, narrative framing, degree of explicitness)

Translation choices were then categorized as predominantly domesticating or foreignizing based on operational indicators derived from Lawrence Venuti (1995).

Domestication indicators included:

- ❖ explicitation or clarification of implicit meaning
- ❖ alignment with target-culture narrative conventions
- ❖ increased anatomical or sensual explicitness (erotic amplification)
- ❖ individualization of culturally collective experiences

Foreignization indicators included:

- ❖ retention of culturally specific metaphors or imagery
- ❖ preservation of ambiguity, silence, or interpretive opacity
- ❖ absence of explanatory adaptation
- ❖ maintenance of culturally embedded gender norms (e.g., honor/shame logic)

Each example was assigned a dominant strategy based on the preponderance of these features, while acknowledging that some cases may exhibit hybrid tendencies.

For instance, in the wedding-dress fitting scene, the English translation intensifies corporeal explicitness:

“I artfully arranged the lace to rub and excite her budding breasts... layered stiff net... that pecked at her ass and nibbled her silky thighs.”

This instance is classified as domestication, as the translation foregrounds anatomical sensuality and aligns the passage with Western realist conventions, thereby shifting the representation of female corporeality from a culturally regulated domain of honor into an individualized erotic experience.

By contrast, in Aisha’s reflective passage:

“I stood in front of the mirror with bare shoulders... let the Meccan night and the lace take turns licking my breasts.”

The translation preserves metaphorical density and avoids explanatory rationalization. This instance is classified as foreignization, as it maintains the culturally embedded fusion of bodily experience, spatial context, and symbolic meaning, requiring the target reader to engage with an unfamiliar gendered framework. To ensure analytical consistency, each excerpt was examined using the same comparative procedure. The Arabic source passage was first analyzed independently to identify culturally embedded gender meanings, after which the English translation was evaluated in relation to lexical shifts, metaphor retention, explicitation, omission, and narrative framing. Translation strategies were assigned based on the dominant cluster of features observed across the excerpt rather than isolated lexical items. This procedure reduced reliance on impressionistic judgment and ensured that classification decisions were grounded in recurring textual patterns.

Stage 3: Interpretation of Cultural and Ideological Effects

The final stage involves interpreting the broader cultural and ideological implications of the identified translation strategies. Rather than evaluating translation accuracy, the analysis focuses on how domestication and foreignization reshape gendered meaning across contexts.

This stage traces systematic shifts such as:

- ❖ from collective social regulation to individual subjectivity
- ❖ from honor-based cultural frameworks to universalized or individualized desire
- ❖ from implicit gendered tension to explicit corporeal representation

Interpretations are grounded in a triangulated framework combining:

- ❖ textual evidence from the aligned corpus,
- ❖ translation theory (Venuti, 1995), and
- ❖ feminist translation scholarship (Simon, 1996; Flotow, 1997).

This triangulated procedure enhances methodological rigor by integrating textual evidence, operationalized translation-strategy indicators, and established feminist translation theory. Rather than relying solely on subjective interpretation, analytical claims were grounded in recurring linguistic and discursive patterns identified across the dataset. The use of multiple analytical levels (lexical, syntactic, and discursive) further strengthens interpretive validity by allowing patterns of gendered reconfiguration to be examined from complementary perspectives.

To enhance methodological transparency, [Table 1](#) summarizes the operational analytical criteria used to identify and classify translation strategies across the selected Arabic–English excerpts.

Table 1. Operational Analytical Criteria Used in Translation Strategy Classification

Analytical Level	Indicators Examined	Example Features
Lexical	Word choice and semantic shift	explicitation, sensual intensification
Syntactic	Structural transformation	omission, grammatical restructuring
Discursive	Narrative framing and symbolism	metaphor retention, silence, ambiguity
Strategy Classification	Dominant translational tendency	domestication / foreignization

As shown in [Table 2](#), the analytical framework combines lexical, syntactic, and discursive levels of analysis in order to systematically examine how translation strategies contribute to the reconfiguration of gendered meaning in the target text.

To enhance methodological transparency, the stages of corpus selection and analysis are summarized in Figure 1, which presents a PRISMA-style workflow adapted to qualitative textual analysis.

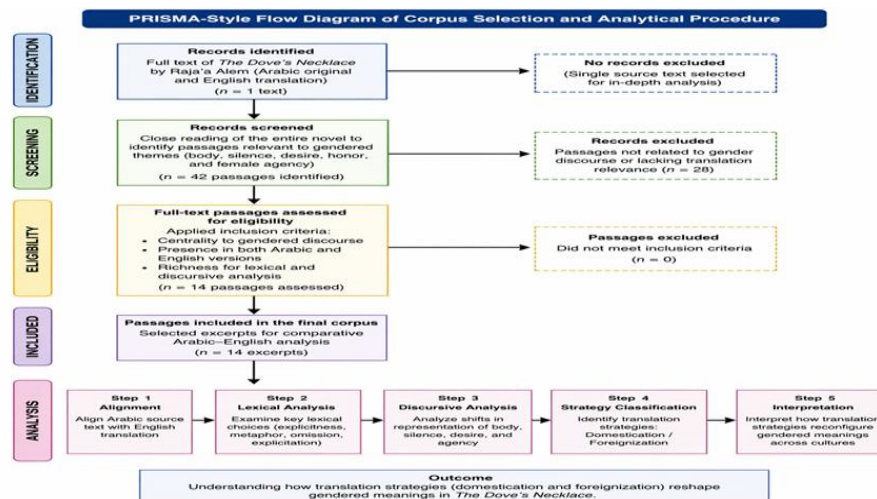


Figure 2. PRISMA-style flow diagram of corpus selection and analytical procedure.

The diagram illustrates the stages through which gender-sensitive excerpts were identified, screened, and selected, followed by the analytical procedures applied to examine translation strategies and their effects on gendered meaning.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the study follows a structured analytical workflow, progressing from corpus identification and thematic screening to detailed comparative analysis at the lexical and discursive levels, culminating in the classification of translation strategies and interpretation of their cultural effects. This triangulation ensures that conclusions are grounded in textual evidence, theoretical frameworks, and cultural context.

To enhance methodological transparency, the stages of corpus selection and analysis are summarized in Figure 2, which presents a PRISMA-style workflow adapted to qualitative textual analysis.

3.3.1. Reliability and Analytical Validity

Given the interpretive nature of qualitative translation analysis, several measures were adopted to enhance analytical reliability and validity. First, all excerpts were selected according to predefined thematic criteria related to female corporeality, silence, honor, and agency. Second, translation strategies were classified using operational indicators derived from Venuti's domestication–foreignization framework. Third, the analysis was conducted comparatively across lexical, syntactic, and discursive levels to reduce dependence on isolated textual features. Finally, interpretations were cross-referenced with feminist translation scholarship and the broader Saudi cultural context to ensure theoretical and contextual consistency.

3.4. Methodological Rationale

By integrating close textual comparison with feminist and translation theory, this methodology enables a nuanced examination of how translation strategies reshape gendered discourse in *The Dove's Necklace*. The inclusion of concrete bilingual examples within the analytical procedure demonstrates how micro-level translation decisions produce macro-level cultural effects. Ultimately, this approach allows the study to show that translation functions not as a neutral transfer of meaning but as a site of cultural reconfiguration, where gendered narratives are actively negotiated and transformed across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Given the figurative density and cultural specificity of the text, a qualitative approach is more suitable than frequency-based corpus methods for capturing ideological shifts in gendered meaning. The methodological procedure was designed to prioritize analytical transparency and interpretive consistency, allowing the relationship between translation strategy and gendered meaning to be examined systematically across the selected corpus.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Overview of Findings

The comparative analysis of selected passages from *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja'a Alem indicates that translation strategies play a significant role in reshaping gendered meanings as the text moves from Arabic into English. The findings suggest that domestication individualizes and sensualizes female corporeality, while foreignization preserves culturally specific forms of honor, silence, and female authority.

These strategies operate unevenly across the dataset, producing shifts that influence how gendered bodies, desire, and agency are interpreted by the target readership. The results therefore support the view that translation functions as a site of cultural mediation rather than neutral transfer.

4.2. Domestication and the Erotic Reconfiguration of the Female Body

A prominent pattern emerging from the analysis is the domestication of female corporeality through intensified anatomical and sensual detail in the English translation. This is evident in the Turkish designer's account of dressing Aisha for her wedding:

حرصت على احتكاك الدانتيل بحسية توقظ ثديها الذي كان في طور التبرعم، تركت التفتا تلغق ساقها، والجبيون بطبقات القطن والشرك المغرق في النشا يقرص مؤخرتها وحرير فخذيها.... (171)

At the lexical level, the translation introduces greater anatomical specificity ("breasts," "ass," "thighs"), however, at the discursive level, it amplifies sensual verbs ("rub," "lick," "nibble"), increasing erotic salience. From a feminist translation perspective, this shift may simultaneously increase the visibility of female desire and reduce its cultural complexity by aligning it with familiar target-culture models of erotic individuality. The translation therefore raises an important tension: it can be interpreted as making female embodiment more openly legible, yet it may also weaken the source text's critique of the social structures governing female visibility and bodily control within the Saudi context.

Within the Arabic cultural context, the scene is embedded in discourses of honor, surveillance, and transgressive exposure, where bodily unveiling signifies social risk rather than erotic consumption. The English rendering can therefore be interpreted as domesticating, as it aligns the passage with target-culture narrative conventions that foreground individualized sensual experience. This shift suggests a reorientation of female corporeality from a socially regulated domain into a more individualized and aestheticized form of representation, supporting arguments in feminist translation studies that translation can reshape gendered meaning rather than merely transferring it (Simon, 1996).

4.3. Foreignization and the Preservation of Gendered Silence

In contrast, the analysis identifies instances in which the translation adopts a foreignizing tendency that preserves culturally specific forms of gendered silence without explanatory adaptation. This is particularly evident in the scene surrounding the unidentified female corpse, where the retention of silence may itself function as a feminist intervention that resists reducing female marginalization to familiar target-culture narratives:

"هل منكم من يعلن قرابته للجثة" (16)

Which is translated as "Is anyone here related to the deceased?"

At the discursive level, the translation retains the brevity of the utterance and the absence of contextual explanation. This preservation of silence is significant, as in the Arabic context it reflects an honor-based mechanism of social avoidance, where association with an exposed female body carries cultural risk.

By maintaining this silence without explicitation, the translation can be interpreted as foreignizing, as it resists assimilation into familiar emotional or legal frameworks and instead preserves an unfamiliar cultural logic. This supports Lawrence Venuti's (1995) argument that foreignization can function as a form of resistance to cultural domestication. In feminist terms, preserving this silence may be understood as an attempt to retain the cultural specificity of women's marginalization rather than translating it into more familiar target-culture narratives of victimhood or emotional disclosure.

4.4. Foreignization of Female Sexual Authority

A further example of foreignization appears in the depiction of female sexual power in the figure of the Turkish fashion designer, whose discourse destabilizes patriarchal norms.

"تعمدت ان احفر في وعيها أنى اقشرها، أنى اشق عنها شرنقتها قباحتها- قفلها واحولها الى خوخة مشقوقة..." (170)

At the discursive level, the translation retains metaphorical density and predatory imagery ("peeling," "cocoon," "sliced peach") without rationalization or mitigation. This preservation of metaphorical excess suggests a foreignizing strategy, as it maintains the culturally charged and destabilizing representation of female sexuality. From a feminist translation perspective, retaining this disruptive imagery may preserve forms of female authority that resist patriarchal containment, even though such representations remain vulnerable to exoticized interpretation within the target culture.

Although this example is categorized as predominantly foreignizing due to its preservation of metaphorical excess, the intensified sensual imagery may also partially accommodate target-culture expectations of exoticized Middle Eastern femininity, illustrating the instability of rigid strategic classification.

Rather than normalizing female agency within familiar psychological frameworks, the translation preserves its disruptive and excessive character. This aligns with arguments by Luise von Flotow (1997), who emphasizes the importance of maintaining resistant representations of female power in translation, even when they challenge target-culture expectations.

4.5. Foreignization and the Translation of Female Interior Desire

Foreignization also operates at the level of female interiority, particularly in Aisha's private email describing her solitary interaction with the wedding dress:

"وقفت امام المرأة بكتفي عاريين، صعدت للسطح، وقفت على برميل صغير يمثل تلك المنصة الأولى، وتركت لليل مكة ان يتناول والدانتيل على لعق جذعي..." (172)

"I stood in front of the mirror with bare shoulders... let the Meccan night and the lace take turns licking my breasts."

At the discursive level, the translation preserves the metaphorical fusion of body, space, and environment ("Meccan night," "lace," "breasts"), without explanatory clarification. This suggests a foreignizing tendency, as the passage retains ambiguity and resists psychologization. The refusal to rationalize or psychologize female desire may also be interpreted as a feminist translational choice that preserves alternative forms of female subjectivity outside dominant Western confessional models. Rather than reframing female desire within individualized or confessional discourse, the translation maintains a culturally embedded mode of interiority characterized by secrecy, spatiality, and symbolic expression. This allows a non-Western configuration of female subjectivity to remain visible in the target text.

5. SYNTHESIS: ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH GAP

Across these examples, the results demonstrate that translation strategies in *The Dove's Necklace* actively reshape gendered meanings as the text moves from Arabic into English. Domestication tends to individualize and eroticize female bodies, whereas foreignization preserves culturally embedded forms of honor, silence, and female power. These shifts confirm the study's central claim that translation operates as a process of cultural reconfiguration, filling a significant gap in existing scholarship that has treated gender representation and translation strategy as separate analytical concerns.

The Arabic–English comparative analysis shows that the English translation of *The Dove's Necklace* does not simply reproduce gendered meanings but renegotiates them through selective domestication and foreignization. By foregrounding this interaction, the study demonstrates that translation is a critical site where gender discourse is transformed across cultures, contributing new insights to feminist translation studies and Arabic–English literary translation research.

6. DISCUSSION

This study set out to examine how translation strategies—specifically domestication and foreignization—reshape gendered meanings in the English translation of *The Dove's Necklace*. The results confirm that translation functions not as a neutral linguistic operation but as a cultural practice

that reconfigures gender discourse, supporting and extending theoretical claims advanced by Venuti (1995), Simon (1996), and Flotow (1997) [5,6,7]. From a feminist translation perspective, these shifts are not ideologically neutral, as translational choices may either preserve culturally specific forms of female agency or reposition them within dominant target-culture frameworks. By analyzing Arabic–English textual transformations, this discussion demonstrates that translation strategies actively renegotiate how female bodies, silence, and agency are culturally understood.

To clarify how translation strategies function as mechanisms of gendered cultural reconfiguration, **Table 1** synthesizes key Arabic–English examples analyzed in this study. Rather than presenting isolated instances of linguistic variation, the table demonstrates how domestication and foreignization systematically reshape gendered meanings by relocating female bodies, silence, and agency within new cultural frameworks. By aligning specific textual transformations with their broader ideological effects, the table renders visible the interaction between translation strategy and gender discourse, as theorized by Venuti (1995), Simon (1996), and Flotow (1997) [5,6,7]. This comparative overview underscores that translation operates not merely as a transfer of content but as an active site where gendered narratives are culturally renegotiated for the target readership. The table also identifies key linguistic shifts through which these strategies produce their cultural effects. Although the examples are not numerically balanced, they reveal a patterned tendency in which domestication is applied mainly to female corporeality, meanwhile foreignization predominates in representations of silence, space, and agency.

Table 2. Translation Strategy and Gendered Cultural Reconfiguration

Arabic Excerpt	English Excerpt	Dominant Strategy	Key Linguistic Shift	Gender Effect
حرصت على احتكاك الدانتيل بحسية توظف ثديها... (171)	"rub and excite her budding breasts..."	Domestication	Anatomical explicitness intensified	Female corporeality becomes individualized and sensualized
ورفعت بذراعي الخفيفتين عاليا في السماء... (173)	"raised my weightless arms to the sky..."	Foreignization	Metaphor preserved without explicitation	Female interiority remains symbolic and non-psychologized
هل منكم من يعلن قرابته "للجنة" (16)	"Is anyone here related to the deceased?"	Foreignization	Silence and brevity retained	Honor-based social avoidance is preserved
أنى اشق عنها "شرقتها" (170)	"unraveling a cocoon... a beautiful sliced peach"	Predominantly foreignization	Metaphorical excess retained	Female agency remains disruptive yet risks exoticization
وقفت امام المرأة بكتفي "عاريين" (172)	"the Meccan night and the lace... licking my breasts"	Foreignization	Symbolic ambiguity maintained	Female desire remains culturally embedded and spatialized
"...انا وراء الحماسة" (171)	"I'm where excitement gets its start..."	Foreignization	Metaphorical intensity preserved	Gendered subjectivity remains non-linear and symbolic
مرة حلمت بأبوس "الرؤوس" (62)	"the Lane... was a woman's body..."	Foreignization	Spatial metaphor retained	Urban space remains symbolically feminized
"...تطردون الملائكة" (62)	"You're driving the angels out..."	Foreignization	Religious metaphor preserved	Moral regulation of female corporeality is maintained
"...وادي ابراهيم" (64)	"the lap of a woman... spread her legs..."	Foreignization	Mythic-sexual imagery preserved	Female origin imagery remains culturally disruptive
كما لو كان يستحضر "صوت أبو الرؤوس" (63)	"the voice of the alley itself were rising..."	Foreignization	Non-human symbolic voice retained	Feminized spatial authority remains intact

Table 2. demonstrates how domestication and foreignization operate as strategic mechanisms that reshape gendered meaning through identifiable linguistic shifts. Domestication appears primarily in representations of female corporeality, where increased explicitness aligns the text with target-culture norms of individualized sensuality. In contrast, foreignization predominates in the rendering of silence, spatial symbolism, and female interiority, preserving culturally embedded forms of gendered meaning. These patterns indicate that translation selectively reconfigures gender discourse rather than uniformly transferring it.

This pattern confirms Venuti's (1995) argument that translation strategies are inherently ideological and supports Simon's (1996) claim that translation relocates gender discourse across cultural systems [5,6]. At the same time, the ambivalence evident in foreignized representations of female sexual authority echoes Flotow's (1997) caution that the preservation of resistant gender meanings can simultaneously contest and risk reproducing dominant ideological spectacle [7].

6.1. Domestication and the Reorientation of Female Corporeality (Venuti)

As summarized in Table 2, the domestication of female corporeality in the English translation of *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja'a Alem is characterized by intensified anatomical explicitness and heightened sensual visibility. Rather than merely transferring descriptive detail, domestication appears to reshape how the female body is culturally legible in the target text.

In the wedding-dress fitting scene discussed above, the Arabic representation of bodily exposure is embedded within a system of honor, surveillance, and social risk, where unveiling signifies a culturally regulated threshold rather than erotic availability. By contrast, in the English translation, this representation is reconfigured through lexical choices that foreground tactile sensation and anatomical specificity, alongside discursive shifts that emphasize individualized bodily experience. This pattern can be interpreted as an instance of domestication in the sense proposed by Lawrence Venuti (1995), whereby foreign texts are assimilated into dominant target-culture norms through increased fluency and recognizability. The female body, in this context, becomes readable within narrative conventions that privilege individualized sensual perception over collective moral regulation. It can be interpreted as predominantly domesticating, although elements of cultural specificity remain partially preserved.

Importantly, this shift operates not only at the level of stylistic representation but also at the level of cultural meaning. By repositioning the female body from a communal framework of honor and restraint into an individualized register of sensual experience, the translation appears to reconfigure the conditions under which female visibility is interpreted. What is attenuated in this process is not simply cultural detail, but a mode of gendered regulation embedded in the source context.

From this perspective, domestication may be understood as a form of cultural normalization, whereby gendered meanings are adjusted to align with target-culture expectations. This finding supports Venuti's argument that translation strategies participate in the construction of cultural values and suggests that gendered meaning is actively mediated through translational choice rather than passively transferred across languages. This pattern, however, should be interpreted cautiously, as domestication operates selectively across the text rather than uniformly, suggesting a strategic rather than systematic reorientation of gendered meaning.

6.2. Relocation of Gendered Meaning (Simon)

As synthesized in Table 2, the translation of female interiority in *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja'a Alem illustrates how gendered meaning is not simply transferred but relocated within a new cultural and ideological framework. Sherry Simon's (1996) concept of relocation is particularly useful for understanding how translation repositions gender discourse across cultures rather than reproducing it unchanged.

In the passages examining female solitude, desire, and bodily awareness, the English translation tends to preserve metaphorical density and sensory ambiguity, particularly at the discursive level. Rather than explicating or rationalizing these representations, the translation maintains symbolic associations between body, space, and environment, resisting the impulse to psychologize female experience.

This preservation allows gendered meaning to remain embedded in culturally specific configurations of secrecy, spatiality, and non-confessional desire. Instead of reframing female subjectivity through familiar target-culture narratives of individual expression or therapeutic disclosure, the translation sustains a mode of interiority that is ritualized, private, and spatially situated.

In Simon's terms, gender discourse is therefore relocated rather than neutralized: it enters the target language though retaining elements of its original cultural logic. This relocation does not result in full transparency or equivalence, but rather produces a form of interpretive tension. The target reader is required to engage with a configuration of female subjectivity that may not align with dominant interpretive frameworks.

From this perspective, relocation can be understood as a mediating process through which gendered meaning circulates across linguistic boundaries without being fully assimilated. The findings suggest that translation may preserve alternative epistemologies of gender by maintaining symbolic and culturally embedded forms of expression, rather than reducing them to universally recognizable categories.

6.3. Female Agency, Excess, and the Risk of Preservation (Flotow)

As indicated in Table 2, the representation of female agency in the English translation of *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja'a Alem is shaped by a predominantly foreignizing strategy that preserves metaphorical excess and narrative disruption. Luise von Flotow's (1997) feminist translation framework is particularly instructive here, as it foregrounds the tension between maintaining resistant representations of female power and avoiding their commodification or exoticization in translation. In the passages centered on the Turkish fashion designer's discourse, female agency is represented through discursively dense and metaphorically excessive language, characterized by imagery of transformation, intrusion, and bodily reconfiguration. At the discursive level, the translation retains this intensity without mitigation or rationalization, suggesting a foreignizing tendency in which preserving metaphorical excess and ambiguity may itself function as a feminist intervention that maintains the disruptive force of the original representation.

This preservation of excess allows female sexuality and authority to remain culturally unsettling, resisting assimilation into familiar target-culture frameworks of empowerment or psychological normalization. In this sense, the translation aligns with Flotow's argument that feminist translation may seek to retain challenging or non-normative representations of gender, rather than rendering them transparent or culturally assimilable.

At the same time, the analysis highlights the risk inherent in such preservation. By maintaining metaphorical predation and bodily transformation without contextual mediation, the translation may expose female agency to interpretive re-framing within the target culture, where it risks being read as exoticized or sensationalized. This ambivalence reflects Flotow's position that translation strategies are not inherently feminist, but are contingent upon their cultural reception and interpretive effects. The foreignization of female agency thus operates as a double-edged strategy: it preserves resistant and destabilizing representations of female power, whereas simultaneously opening the possibility of ideological re-inscription within the target context. From this perspective, female agency in translation emerges not as a stable or transferable category, but as a negotiated construct shaped by translational choices that mediate between resistance, readability, and cultural interpretation.

6.4. Translation as Cultural Reconfiguration of Gender

As summarized in Table 2, translation in *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja'a Alem functions as a process of cultural reconfiguration rather than straightforward linguistic transfer. The interaction between domestication and foreignization reshapes how female bodies, silence, desire, and agency are interpreted in the target text, making translation a site where gender is renegotiated across cultures.

At lexical and discursive levels, domestication tends to individualize and sensualize female corporeality through increased anatomical specificity and erotic emphasis. In contrast, foreignization preserves culturally embedded forms of honor, silence, and metaphorical expression that resist full assimilation into target-culture norms. These strategies operate selectively rather than uniformly, suggesting that different dimensions of gender discourse are subject to distinct translational pressures.

The findings also indicate that domestication and foreignization are not always mutually exclusive. Several passages display hybrid tendencies that preserve culturally specific metaphors while simultaneously intensifying or ideologically reframing other elements for the target readership. This overlap highlights the complexity of literary translation, where preservation and adaptation may coexist within the same passage.

Importantly, the study demonstrates that translation strategies do not affect all dimensions of gender discourse equally. Female corporeality is more frequently subjected to domestication, whereas silence, metaphorical interiority, and honor-based discourse are more often preserved through foreignization. These findings contribute to translation and feminist scholarship by showing how translational choices actively reshape gendered meaning across cultural contexts.

7. Conclusions

7.1. Conclusions

This study examined how domestication and foreignization reshape gendered meanings in the English translation of *The Dove's Necklace* by Raja'a Alem. The findings suggest that translation strategies function not merely as linguistic procedures but as mechanisms of cultural mediation that selectively reconfigure representations of female corporeality, silence, desire, and agency.

The analysis suggests that domestication intensifies individualized sensuality but foreignization preserves metaphorical interiority, honor-based silence, and symbolic gender discourse. Importantly, these strategies do not operate uniformly, but interact unevenly across different dimensions of gender representation, producing hybrid and sometimes ambivalent effects.

More broadly, the findings show that translation selectively preserves, transforms, and reframes culturally specific understandings of gender for transnational readers. This highlights the ideological role of translation in shaping how non-Western gender narratives circulate within global literary systems and reinforces the importance of culturally sensitive approaches to literary translation.

7.2. Implications of the Study

The study demonstrates that domestication and foreignization function not only as translation strategies, but also as mechanisms for reshaping gender discourse across cultural contexts. By integrating Lawrence Venuti's framework with feminist translation theory, the findings show that different dimensions of gendered meaning—such as corporeality, silence, and female agency—are affected unevenly by translational choices, producing distinct ideological effects. In this respect, the study supports Sherry Simon's (1996) argument that translation relocates gendered meaning, while also extending Luise von Flotow's (1997) position by demonstrating that preserving resistant representations of female agency through foreignization may simultaneously challenge dominant norms and risk exoticized reinterpretation.

Methodologically, the study highlights the value of qualitative, text-centered comparative analysis for examining ideological shifts in literary translation. The analysis demonstrates how micro-level translational decisions at lexical and discursive levels can generate broader cultural effects, particularly through elements such as silence, omission, and ambiguity.

Practically, the findings have implications for literary translators, editors, and translation educators working with culturally embedded gender narratives. Strategies aimed at increasing fluency or readability may unintentionally reshape source-culture representations of women, whereas foreignization, despite preserving cultural specificity, may risk exoticization if handled uncritically. The study therefore emphasizes the importance of integrating gender awareness into literary translation practice and translator training.

7.3. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study is based on a limited qualitative corpus of 14 excerpts drawn from a single literary work; therefore, the findings remain context-specific and cannot be generalized to Arabic–English literary translation as a whole. In addition, the text-centered approach focuses primarily on lexical and discursive analysis without incorporating reader reception or the translator's own perspective, both of which could provide further insight into how gendered meanings are interpreted and negotiated across cultures. The study also relies on an interpretive framework grounded in Lawrence Venuti (1995), Sherry Simon (1996), and Luise von Flotow (1997); although this framework offers strong explanatory value, alternative approaches such as corpus-based or cognitive translation studies may provide complementary perspectives.

Future research could extend this analysis to multiple Arabic literary texts, genres, or translators in order to determine whether the identified patterns are context-dependent or more broadly applicable. Further studies may also incorporate reader-response methodologies, paratextual analysis, or translator interviews to examine how gendered meanings are shaped beyond the textual level. Expanding the scope to include machine translation and AI-mediated translation systems would additionally provide insight into how emerging technologies negotiate culturally embedded gender discourse.

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