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**Peter Theroux's Translation of Alia Mamdouh's  
Novel Habbāt An-Naftālīn: A Textual and Semiotic  
Analysis**

An MA Thesis in Translation

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**2009**



# Introduction

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## **Abstract**

Lobna Mohsen Abdel Fattah el-Hakeem. Peter Theroux's Translation of Alia Mamdouh's Novel Habbāt An-Naftālīn: A Textual and Semiotic Analysis. An MA Thesis in Translation. Ain Shams University, Faculty of Al-Asun, Department of English. 2009.

Semiotics and translation studies are a nascent interdisciplinary that has a lot to offer to translators working on diverse genres. One particular sub-genre that can benefit from such collaboration is postcolonial fiction. Postcolonial texts are hybrid multi-dimensional texts full of socio-political, religious, cultural, and gender markers. These markers have to be relayed appropriately in translation to preserve the signification force of the whole work. Moreover, the fiction genre has a specificity of its own exemplified in a number of textual variables. Thus, in order to relay the full semiotic force of postcolonial works and to preserve the textual specificity of the fiction genre, a combined textual and semiotic approach is suggested for the analysis of such hybrid genre. The semiotic analysis is based on Hatim and Mason's semiotic approach (1990), and the textual analysis is based on Berman's textual theory of translation (1985).

The present thesis has multifarious objectives. First, it attempts to examine the extent to which semiotics can prove beneficial to translation studies, specifically to the translation of the postcolonial fiction sub-genre. Second, it suggests literal translation as the most appropriate strategy for rendering a postcolonial text. Third, it

looks at foreignization as one of the valuable tools of literal translation that can help transmit source signs to target readers with minimum cultural loss. Fourth, it proposes an integrated textual and semiotic framework to be applied to postcolonial novels based on Hatim and Mason's semiotic approach (1990) and Berman's textual approach (1985). Finally, it discusses the advantages and disadvantages of using supplementary material for postcolonial fiction translation.

## Summary

Semiotics has recently joined forces with TS to form a unified interdiscipline. Although some theorists are sceptical of the appropriateness of semiotics to tackle the pending issues of translation, many theorists have resorted to semiotics and have devised several semiotic frameworks for tackling the most controversial issues of translation. This has led to the emergence of diverse semiotic approaches based on the two main semiotic schools of Pierce and Saussure. Among these semiotic approaches is Hatim and Mason's semiotic approach (1990). This semiotic approach tackles many important semiotic issues, and presents several recommendations for rendering cultural signs from source to target texts. It also presents two important semiotic processes that translators can follow to guarantee a faithful rendering of source signs. These are the process of semiotic-conscious translation and the process of the recognition and transfer of intertextual references. The resourcefulness of this semiotic approach, and the great potential it holds for tackling different translational issues make it suitable for the analysis of the challenging postcolonial fiction sub-genre.

Postcolonial texts can be considered multidimensional texts that include various cultural, political, social, religious, and gender dimensions that have to be relayed fully in the source text, or the cultural identity of colonized nations will be marginalized. The novel chosen for the analysis is the postcolonial feminist narrative *Habbāt An-Naftālīn* (2000) written by the Iraqi novelist Alia Mamdouh. This novel is