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Dethronement of the Original Text in Rendering Arabic Culture-Specific Poetry: A Study of Some Selected Texts

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with investigating the issue of translating culture-specific poetry from Arabic into English. The focus of this study is to reveal how the Arabic culture-specific poems are renarrated within a new receiving culture. By exploring the translation procedures that have been employed by different professional translators, the study clarifies whether they have adopted foreignization (i.e. they translate the poem) or domestication (i.e. they renarrate a new original poem), portraying a culture deviant from the original and hence dethroning the original. The study, thus, handles the problem of “dethroning” (Vermeer, 1984) the original text in rendering culture-specific poetry from Arabic into English with the aim of laying down the criteria for translating such kind of poetry. In translation, dethronement means that the translator disregards the source text producing a new text that has very little or even nothing in common with the original in order to meet the expectations of the target readers. Therefore, the study raises the major questions of whether the cultural features of the original Arabic poem are faithfully conveyed in its English translated version, and what the main procedures used in reframing the narratives of the poets in a new cultural narrative are. It also raises a question about the role played by the translator in the process of renarration, and about the criteria that should be followed when Arabic culture-specific poetry is rendered into English. For this study, six poems have been selected, namely, the two odes of Imru'al-Qays and Tarafa translated by O'Grady (1997), Al-Busiri's “Burda” translated by Thoraya Allam (1987), Hafez Ibrahim's “Describing a Suit” translated by Tingley (1987), Omar Abu Risha's “An Eagle” translated by Boullata and Ezzy (1987) and Nazik al-Mala'ika's “Love Song for Words” translated by Middleton (1987). Within the framework of narrative and skopos

theories, the selected texts are analyzed qualitatively by describing and examining the process of translation where the target texts are cross-culturally compared to their originals. The major finding that emerges from the analysis is that the main translation strategy is that of domestication which involves lack of cultural exchange.

Keywords: poetry; cultureme; Skopos; domestication; translation procedures, renarration and translatum.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION