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**Transcultural Journal for Humanities and Social Sciences (TJHSS)** is a journal committed to disseminate a new range of interdisciplinary and transcultural topics in Humanities and social sciences. It is an open access, peer reviewed and refereed journal, published by Badr University in Cairo, BUC, to provide original and updated knowledge platform of international scholars interested in multi-inter disciplinary researches in all languages and from the widest range of world cultures. It's an online academic journal that offers print on demand services.

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**Lost in Translation: A Feminist Translation Analysis of Nawal El Saadawi's  
*Diary of A Child Called Souad***

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**Abstract**

By bringing together feminist studies, literary studies and translation studies, a dialogic convergence emerges that enables a thorough exploration of power dynamics and resistance regarding the transformative roles of women as authors, translators, and social justice activists across various geohistorical contexts. A case in point is Nawal El Saadawi's writings and their translations that are always associated with dissidence, or the act of opposing or challenging established power structures and dominant narratives. The—aim of this paper is to study to what extent gender translation strategies are used by the translator Omnia Amin to produce the English version of Nawal El Saadawi's *Diary of a Child called Souad*, originally written in Arabic. Thus, this paper revisits Flotow's (1991/1997) gender translation strategies and Genette's (1997) paratexts to study their resonance with the translation of a feminist text produced in the English-speaking context. In other words, this paper probes into the ways in which various paratextual features can be strategically employed in the selected translated work to conform to the prevailing stereotypes held by the receiving culture. Specifically, the paper scrutinizes the translated version of El Saadawi's “/mudhakkirāt tiflah asmuha saʿād/” in order to investigate how Arab women were portrayed in 1944. It opens more discussion on the politics of feminist texts crossing different borders and cultures via translation. It shows how Amin's interventions reshape the English version of the book so that the force of El Saadawi's feminist message is amplified in some places and mitigated in others.

**Keywords:** Feminist translation strategies, gender activism, translating feminist writers, paratext

**1. Introduction**

The prevalence of literature across linguistic and cultural boundaries is not solely accomplished on its own, but rather facilitated through the involvement of cultural mediators such as translators, publishers and critics. Since translation can be considered a form of rewriting, it has the potential to generate distinct perceptions and portrayals of authors and their work within a different cultural setting (Lefevere, 1992). Various factors come into play during the process of rewriting including the selection of texts to be translated at a particular time, the translators responsible for the translation, the manner in which they approach the translation of the texts, the original texts that emerge discussing the author, and the paratextual materials provided alongside the translations. All these factors are governed by the socio-cultural context of the target system.



There has always been a surge in translating Nawal El Saadawi's work, this can be justified by identifying the various factors that shape the process of rewriting in translation. Some of these factors include the selection of texts to be translated in a specific period, the translators involved in the translation process, their method of translation, the reception of the original texts that discuss the author, and the presence of paratextual materials accompanying the translations. It is also crucial to recognize that these factors are controlled in one way or another by the socio-cultural context within the target system. As for translating Nawal El Saadawi's work, the increased interest and translation of her writings can be due to the interplay of these factors, reflecting her socio-cultural background and the growing recognition of her reputation as a writer and feminist activist.

Nawal El Saadawi is considered one of the most prominent writers in the history of the Arab world, particularly in feminist activism and literature. El Saadawi was a doctor who was born in 1931 and passed away in 2021. She was regarded as a prominent voice in the Arab feminist movement and was notorious for her writings on women's rights and gender equality in the Middle East. Her life was very challenging as she faced censorship, imprisonment and death threats for her activism and vigorous writing. Despite these challenges, she continued to speak out for women's rights and social justice. According to Suwaed (2017), she is the solely female Egyptian writer who daringly discussed the relation between women's sexual oppression on the one hand and women's social and political oppression on the other hand.

A significant part of El Saadawi's writings always go against traditional cultural and religious norms, patriarchal power structures and political domination. El Saadawi's oeuvre has always been a rich area for research across a range of academic disciplines including feminist studies, literary studies, and translation studies. Moreover, her narratives have been highly controversial in challenging patriarchal and colonial structures in the Arab world, and in giving voice to women. Several critics have discussed El Saadawi's works, Amireh (1997), for instance, highlights how El Saadawi's narratives tackle issues of power, identity, and stereotypical representation, and how they offer an insightful account of discourses of gender, sexuality, politics, and religion. Overall, Amireh's analysis of El Saadawi's works underlines their significant contribution to the feminist and postcolonial studies and emphasizes their current significance in the contemporary world. Thus, the translations of El Saadawi's work can be situated within an interdisciplinary framework that emerges from the intersections of translation studies, cultural studies, gender and feminist studies.

The translation investigated in the context of this paper is Nawal El Saadawi's “/mudhakkirāt tiflah asmuha saʿād/ *Diary of a Child Called Souad*” by Omnia Amin<sup>1</sup> who “had the good fortune of becoming Nawal's translator, I [Omnia Amin] also produced English versions of many of her books. Later, when weakened by illness, she chose me as her official spokesperson” (Amin, 2021, para. 12). The significance of this study lies in how the narrative being examined encompasses a complex interweaving of temporal dimensions, spanning across multiple time periods throughout its publication. The diary was initially written in 1944, then it underwent subsequent publication in 1990, and eventually, in 2017, it underwent the process of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://altibrah.ae/author/10023>

translation. This convergence of disparate eras within the narrative's life cycle serves to showcase its enduring significance and highlights the diverse stages of its formation and dissemination over the passage of time.

Accordingly, this study attempts to examine the complex interplay between translation and cultural representation within the context of postcolonial societies. Specifically, this paper scrutinizes the translated book of Nawal El Saadawi in order to investigate how Arab women were portrayed back then in 1944. The inquiry probes the ways in which various paratextual features can be strategically employed in the publication of translated works to conform to the prevailing stereotypes held by the receiving culture, which in this case is the West, regarding Arab women. The present study endeavors to demonstrate how instances of feminism embedded in the original Arabic novel are amplified in some places and mitigated in others. Eventually, the study endeavors to address the question: what are the gender translation strategies which have been adopted in the selected translated book? and to what extent can various paratextual features be strategically employed in the selected translated work to conform to the prevailing stereotypes held by the receiving culture?

## **2. Theoretical Underpinnings**

### **2.1 Translation and Violence**

Violence in translation refers to the power dynamics and distortions that can occur during the translation process, resulting in the loss or erasure of certain elements from the original work. This loss can manifest in various ways including the alteration of cultural nuances, the omission of specific references, or the dilution of the author's intended message. As a result, the translated version may not fully capture the richness and complexity of the original text, leading to a diminished representation of the author's work in the new cultural context. Nevertheless, the act of translation inherently carries the potential for violence (Venuti, 1995).

Translation rewrites a foreign text in terms that are intelligible and interesting to readers in the receiving culture. Doing so is akin to committing an act of ethnocentric violence by uprooting the text from the language and culture that gave it life (p. 195).

Venuti (1995) expressed concern regarding the visibility or lack thereof of translators. Furthermore, he investigated the ethical implications associated with translation. He criticized the prevailing dominance of neocapitalist values within the English-speaking world. He argued that when translations into English are rendered fluently and 'invisibly,' it subtly incorporates and reinforces these values within the translated texts, thereby suppressing the foreignness of the source text and potentially leading to 'ethnocentric violence'.

In the same vein, Spivak (1992) addressed the controversial aspects of translation in relation to feminist work. Spivak specifically highlighted the shortcomings of certain translation practices in the context of postcolonialism. These practices involved simplifying texts for the sake of "easy reading" and disregarding the inherent differences between women writers and their distinct political perspectives. These practices, accordingly, diluted the cultural differences between the source and target contexts, in an attempt to preserve reductionist thinking. Several

studies have been conducted to observe instances where women's texts from diverse cultures are (mis)appropriated through translation for numerous purposes, often prioritizing the texts' accessibility and readability. A case in point is Flotow and Farahzad's (2017) study, they explained how Marilyn Booth's "Girls of Riyadh" novel underwent many modifications not only by the author of the Arabic original novel but by the publisher to come hand in hand with their respective intentions in the English version.

## 2.2 Gender Translation

Inspired Bell Hook's (2001) succinct definition of feminism as embodying sexism, sexual exploitation and ultimate oppression, a wide variety of translation strategies have been developed to promote feminism in translation. Also, Spivak's (1992) *Politics of Translation* represents an early attempt to combine a deconstructionist framework with a political focus on social activism (Staten, 2005). This framework has been advanced by other scholars, including Arrojo (1998), who seek to incorporate feminist politics into the translation of literary texts and poststructuralist theories of discourse. Among these scholars, von Flotow (1991, 1997) and Simon (1996) who made outstanding contributions, of gender and sexuality in translation. In addition, De Lotbiniere-Harwood (1991), along other prominent feminist translators, advocated the translation of texts that abide by feminist theory and suggested the use of constructive feminist translation strategies. She described this approach as "rewriting in the feminine.". In attempting to capture the playful use of language of the source texts to express feminism, she employs creative linguistic choices and uses paratextual elements such as footnotes and prefaces. These elements serve to make the presence of the translator in the translation more visible. Feminist translators see prefaces as opportunities to assert their role in shaping translation and provide valuable insights into the cultural and linguistic complexities involved. For them, prefaces are important tools for a transparent and empowering, enabling them to assert their role and contribute to the discourse of gender and translation.

## 2.3 Paratextuality

Genette (1997) defines paratexts as the elements (it could be verbal or visual) that appear with a text such as the author's name, title, preface and illustrations. The function of these elements is to represent the main text in a specific way. Moreover, Genette (1997) differentiates between peritexts and epitexts within a book. Peritext refers to the supplementary material physically surrounding the book. This includes the publisher's peritexts such as the front and back covers, blurbs, and the list of other works by the author or translator. Also, it includes prefaces and introductions which can be written by the author or the translator if the book is a translated one. On the other hand, epitexts are texts that are external to the book but written about it. Epitexts can be interviews, book reviews, or any other discussions or commentaries about the book.

The significance of peritexts and epitexts act as "thresholds" through which readers access the contents of a book. These paratextual elements play a pivotal role in shaping readers' perspectives, and these elements have a strong impact on the readers' decision to connect and interact with the main text or not (Genette, 1997). Paratexts, according to Batchelor (2018), increase the visibility of the translator; this is because paratexts influence the way the translated work is received. Moreover,

translators utilize paratexts to provide alternative knowledge. For instance, Aboubakr (2016) employs prefaces to provide more details about the connection between language and gender-related issues while also exploring the strategies employed to highlight the blunt gender associations available in Arabic and English. Aboubakr's (2016) translation of "Men in Charge: Rethinking Authority in Muslim Legal Tradition" incorporates a preface where she explains her concerns, viewpoints, and translation strategies. In particular, she focuses on reevaluating the notion of male authority over women within the framework of Islam. Aboubakr (2016) argues that the prevailing laws derived from obsolete interpretations of concepts such as *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*, which establish women's subservience to male dominance, no longer align with Islam's principles of justice.

Affeich and Hilal's (2020) study has endeavored to explore the extent to which the translation strategies employed by translator Nour El-Assaad in the Arabic rendition of Joumana Haddad's book, titled *I Killed Scheherazade: Confessions of an Angry Arab Woman*, can be interpreted as 'feminist'. Hilal's study utilized Flotow (1991/1997), Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood (1990), and Simon (1996) feminist translation strategies. The study basically investigated how translator subtle interventions offered insights into the representation of women's issues in new contexts, even when the motives behind these interventions were not explicitly stated by the writer or translator.

Another study has been conducted to examine the translation of *Ḥikāyat Zahrah* (1995) by Hanan Al-Shaykh, translated by Peter Ford, from a feminist translation perspective (Zaylah et al., 2021). Recognizing the pivotal role of language in advancing social justice, the study debated how feminist translation emphasized an approach to language that highlighted women's concerns and challenges patriarchal ideologies. The objective of the study was to analyze the portrayal of the female protagonist, Zahra, in the English version of the novel compared to the original Arabic version. It examined the transfer of Zahra's character, examining her experiences, emotions, and thoughts, and assessing whether the translator's interventions altered her representation in the English version. The findings revealed that only 21% of the examples demonstrate adherence to the feminist translation approach while the majority overlooked the feminist nuances present in the text.

Ashraf (2020) has conducted a research paper on the paratextual elements in the English translation of El Saadawi's "The Innocence of the Devil". The English translation was done by Malti-Douglas who victimized El Saadawi in her Arab society. Ashraf (2020) has analysed Malti-Douglas' introduction and has concluded that there was a deliberate emphasis on the representation of women in a manner that reinforced stereotypical concepts of Arab women and preserved a specific ideology of Eastern culture. Moreover, Ashraf (2020) has criticized the unnecessary use of footnotes in the target text as they served to widen the gap between the source text and the target readers.

Nevertheless, the present study investigates how Omnia Amin utilized gender translation strategies and paratextual elements to represent Egyptian women in 1944 and whether the English translation in 2017 aligns with or challenges the predominant stereotypical representations of women in the West. This research investigates

whether there are any drastic shifts or continuity in the women construal over time, providing valuable insights into gender representation in translation studies.

### 3. Data and Methodology

This section offers a comprehensive overview of the selected corpus (i.e the source and the target texts) and the adopted framework.

#### 3.1 Corpus of the Study

El Sadaawi's diary was originally a written composition in 1944, then published under the title “/mudhakkirāt tiflah asmuha saḡād/” in 1990. Nevertheless, the translation was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2017. El-Saadawi's dairy is 75 pages, and it is divided into three chapters: (1)The price of writing; (2)introduction; and (3)Diary of a girl called Souad. On the other hand, Amin's translated book consists of 167 pages including an (1) introduction, (2) Author's introduction; (3) *Diary of a Child Called Souad*; (4) *Nawal El Saadawi and a History of Oppression: Brief Biographical Facts*; (5) *Interview with Nawal El Saadawi*, and *Index* as seen in Figure 1.

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**Figure 1.** Source text table of contents

**Figure 2.** Target text table of contents

In her introductory remarks, El Saadawi contextualized her own piece of art. She narrated that she stumbled upon a notebook from her first year of secondary school while sifting in an old drawer in her personal library in 1990. The notebook contained an assignment that has the title "Composition Homework" she had completed in 1944 under the guidance of her Arabic language teacher. The task was to select a topic and compose a three-page essay for an upcoming composition class. El Saadawi opted to write under the title *Diary of a Child Called Souad*. Reflecting on the experience, El Saadawi revealed that she dedicated a full three weeks to the task,

pouring her heart and soul into the writing process. After completing the assignment, El Saadawi submitted her work to her Arabic teacher, who checked it and subsequently gave her zero. The teacher requested her to redo the composition, instructing that it should not exceed three pages. El Saadawi recalled her astonishment at her literary prowess at such a young age. Inspired by her own talent, she resolved to publish her original "Composition Homework" under the same title, without any additional edits or modifications.

### **3.2 Methodology**

As mentioned earlier, the study aims to investigate gender translation strategies used by Omnia Amin in translating El Sadaawi's book. For the analysis of the selected corpus, the study employs von Flotow's (1991) gender translation strategies and Genette's (1997) paratexts.

#### **3.2.1 Von Flotow (1991) Feminist Translation Strategies**

Flotow (2019) categorizes feminist translation strategies into (i) macro-strategies including "non-translation, retranslation and strategic text selection," and (ii) micro-strategies including "omission, addition, supplementing and the development of various stylistic, grammatical and lexical innovations". These strategies were the nucleus in the first forays of feminist politics into translation in the 1970s and 1980s.

Among the most common of these translation strategies, as identified by von Flotow (1991), are supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and hijacking. Firstly, the supplementing strategy in feminist translation projects, according to von Flotow (1999, p. 14), involves compensating for linguistic discrepancies between the source and target languages through assertive and proactive interventions by the translator. As maintained by Flotow (2019), the primary function of this micro-translation strategy is to create room for feminine presence in language. Simply put, many languages tend to use masculine forms as the default, assuming that they include both men and women. In English language, for instance, words like "dean," "lecturer," "doctor," "teacher," "engineer," and "captain" are often masculine, with no feminine forms. In other words, women are not "dean" as explicitly indicated in the language and are, in fact, excluded by its language rules. Accordingly, feminist translators and writers sometimes use only feminine forms or create new ones to draw attention to the problem of gender in language.

Another gender translation strategies are prefacing and footnoting. These strategies are considered macro-translation strategies that translators commonly use to provide crucial information about the source text in order to highlight the socio-cultural background that have contributed to women marginalization and oppression. This crucial information provides thorough explanations of the challenging ideas they present for readers. Moreover, these prefaces often include political or literary theory and textual examples (Flotow, 2019, p. 181). As supported by Ergun (2013), translators' prefaces are utilized to elucidate and substantiate the intellectual activism inherent in feminist translation, which endeavors to engender innovative, feminist ideologies and epistemologies and to disseminate them to a broader readership. Translators' prefaces serve as a forum for the exploration of feminist principles, histories, and conceptual frameworks as well as for the explication of the distinct

translation challenges that may arise; they afford the translator an opportunity to emerge as a discerning and highly knowledgeable contributors. As far as feminist translation is concerned, footnoting serves similar pursuits: they highlight the translator's presence and engagement by discussing the available linguistic challenges. Thus, prefaces and footnotes alike provide the space and the freedom for translators to highlight the feminist perspective of the translation and/or the source text, to explicate their methodology, and to apprise readers of their intentions. This strategy underscores the translator's commitment to raising awareness of the social and political factors that undergird gender inequality.

Thirdly, the hijacking strategy is a micro-translation strategy and the most controversial one. It necessitates an intervention by the feminist translator, who seeks to appropriate the text with no relation with feminism to be recognized (Flotow, 2019). This strategy is described to be "a practical" strategy as it entails the "correction" of patriarchal language by imbuing it with feminist signification that reflects the essential qualities of women. The term "hijack" implies an act involving the use of force to commandeer a vehicle, thereby altering its course or broadcasting aims and interests, and subsequently demanding redress from a governing authority. This linguistic practice of translation serves to underscore the assertive stance of feminism vis-à-vis male hegemony in language, and thus reflects women's relentless quest for transformative change in society. It aimed at subverting the power structure that is dominated by men which is achieved either by adding a perspective of women signification or deleting male hegemony in language. This negative term is repurposed in the literary realm by critics and translators such as Flotow and Godard, who are utilized to rectify the text by any means necessary in order to construct feminist language that accurately reflects the lived experiences of women (Junbin, 2020).

On another note, viewed from a feminist perspective, Flotow (2019) stresses the significance of non-translation, retranslation, and strategic text selection. It is not incumbent upon feminist translators to translate all texts; certain texts may not warrant such an endeavor. Actually, abstaining from translation can serve as a sensible approach, as it allows us to stay apprised of texts that may promote ideologies that are opposing to feminism. Flotow advocates this "silent strategy" by referring to the retranslation strategy, she considers Laghazali's (2017) retranslation of Qur'anic texts as an example of how retranslation by adherents of Islamic feminism, who seek to disentangle these works from their historical patriarchal moorings and rectify their use as channels of oppression. Finally, Flotow (2019) magnifies the magnitude of being proactive and strategic in the translators' text selection since prioritizing the translation of meaningful, inspirational works is indispensable for the advancement of feminism.

### **3.2.2 Genette's paratexts**

Genette (1997) argues that any literary work primarily consists of a text, which can be described as a sequence of verbal statements with varying degrees of significance. However, this text is rarely presented in a bare and plain state. It is often accompanied by additional verbal or visual elements, such as the author's name, a title, a preface, or illustrations. While it may not always be clear whether these accompanying elements are considered part of the text itself, they nonetheless surround and expand upon it. Their purpose is to present the text, not only in the

conventional sense of making it available but also in the broader sense of bringing it into existence, ensuring its presence in the world, and facilitating its reception and understanding, typically in the form of a book.

Paratextuality, following Genette (1997), encompasses the transitional devices and conventions existing both within the book itself (peritext) and outside of it (epitext). These paratextual elements serve as mediators between the book and the reader, including titles, book covers, dustcovers, subtitles, pseudonyms, forewords, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, intertitles, notes, illustrations, epilogues, and afterwords. Genette's (1997) explanation of paratextual elements predominantly focuses on textual elements, but he acknowledges the presence of non-textual manifestations as well. These non-textual elements include iconic elements like illustrations, material elements such as typography, format, binding, and paper quality, and factual elements like the author's gender, age, reputation, and awards.

By considering not only textual elements but also factual, iconic, and material elements, Genette incorporates social and economic aspects into his analyses. He recognizes that these elements not only introduce a text to potential readers but also exert influence over the marketing, selling, and interpretation of a book, guiding the readers' experience in a particular direction. These framing elements play a significant role. Additionally, Genette (1997) elucidates that the analysis of the "epitext" of the book, includes elements from its public and private history. The "public epitexts" include those originating from the author or publisher, while the "private epitexts" involve authorial correspondence, diaries, and pre-texts.

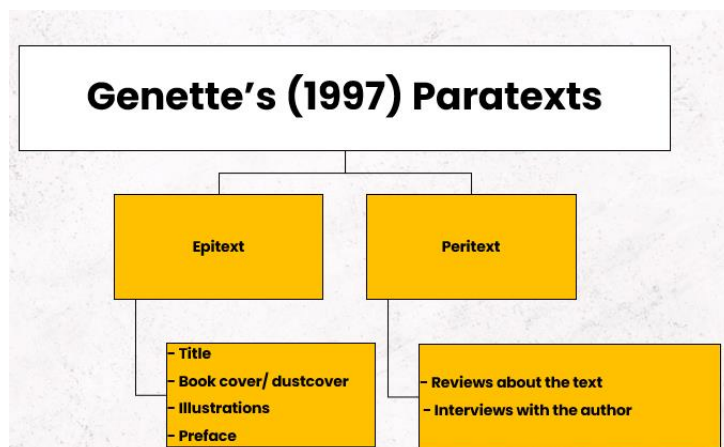
On another note, Genette adds that there are number of features that need to be considered to analyse these paratextual elements. These features serve to describe the spatial, temporal, substantial, pragmatic, and functional characteristics of a paratextual message. To be more specific, defining a paratextual element involves determining its location in relation to the main text, the timeframe of its appearance and potential disappearance, its mode of existence (whether verbal or otherwise), the sender and recipient involved in its communication, and the functions that its message intends to fulfill.

The spatial status of any paratextual element is identified when it takes physical form, and it is always located in relation to the main text. It can either be within the same book (as in titles and prefaces) or placed at a certain distance from it (as in interviews and reviews). As for the temporal aspect of the paratext, it can also be understood in relation to the timing of the production of the original text. If the date of the text's initial publication is to be considered, certain paratextual elements precede it in terms of public production. These elements include prospectuses, announcements of upcoming publications, or components that are associated with prepublication in newspapers or magazines. Sometimes, these elements may disappear once the text is published in book form. Moreover, Genette (1997) maintains that the pragmatic status of a paratextual element is determined by the specific characteristics of its communication context, which include factors such as the identities of the sender and recipient, the level of authority and responsibility held by the sender, the intended purpose or impact of the sender's message, as well as other potentially relevant features that may have been unintentionally omitted.

According to Genette (1997), prefaces, and introductions have a strategic role as they provide guidance and explanation to the target reader. These are literary tools



which play a crucial role in conveying significant information to readers and shed light on an author's intentions and interpretations, as well as those of the publisher. Furthermore, they offer valuable insights into the translator's choices and stances towards specific topics.



*Figure 3.* Genette's (1997) Paratextual features

#### 4. Analysis

##### 4.1 Flotow's (1991/2019) translation strategies

- **Strategic text selection**

Amin's choice to translate this particular work demonstrates Flotow's strategic text selection. The translator's choice underscores the power of selecting a particular work to discuss controversial issues of gender, stereotypical representation, and power dynamics. When selecting texts for translation, translators are privileged to shape narratives and influence how gender is portrayed and perceived. Example 1 shows how the translator in her own introduction provided a rationale for selecting this particular work to be translated. Amin referred to Nawal El Saadawi's personal experience with her first piece of writing, an Arabic assignment, being banned by her Arabic teacher when she was just 16 years old. This incident served as a foreshadowing or forecast of the recurring pattern of El Saadawi's work being banned in the Middle East later.

##### **Example (1)**

In other words, Nawal El Saadawi's first piece of extended writing was banned. (...) *Diary of a Child Called Souad* is, in fact, El Saadawi's first step on a long and arduous journey to show that the act of writing is an act of fighting oppression on personal, social, and political levels. The young Souad understood this, and the Nawal El Saadawi of today is a testimonial to it. By looking at her life and works, especially this first piece of writing, I address in this introduction one question: Why is Nawal El Saadawi considered so dangerous that she has to be banned?

(Amin, 2017, p. 4)

As seen in example 1, the choice to translate and highlight her experience of having her work banned by her Arabic teacher at a young age demonstrated a

conscious decision to bring attention to the gendered aspects of censorship and suppression. By focusing on a personal story of a young woman's voice being silenced, the translation emphasized the challenges and barriers faced by women in expressing themselves freely.

In other words, Amin explained that the rejection of Nawal's first writing composition in 1944 was an echo and justification for the subsequent banning of her work in the Arab world. This rejection at the outset of her writing career foreshadowed the challenges and resistance she would face throughout her life as a prominent feminist writer and activist. This suggested a broader pattern of gender-based censorship. This selection highlighted the specific struggles faced by women writers and intellectuals in oppressive societies, shedding light on the structural biases and limitations imposed on their voices.

- **Hijacking**

One of the hijacking strategies that has been employed in the translated text was the deliberate omission of the author's introduction "ثمن الكتابة," which typically served as a fixed and standardized one in all of El Saadawi's work as indicated in the footnote of the source text.

**Example (2)**

Source Text
<p>مقدمة</p> <p>ثمن الكتابة</p> <p>لا أجد كتابة المقدمات، يمكن أن أكتب قصةً من ألف صفحة، ولا أستطيع كتابة مقدمةٍ من نصف صفحة، أما رفيقة عمري فهي شخصية عصية على الفهم، تكتب في النوم كما تكتب وهي صاحبة، لا تهتم بدورة الأرض حول نفسها، أو دورتها حول الشمس. تضحك وتقول: نحن أحرار، ندور كما نشاء؛ حول أنفسنا، أو حول غيرنا، أو لا ندور. (El-Saadawi, 2017, p.7).</p>

Example 2, as presented, is extracted directly from the source text and has not undergone any translation. In other words, example 2 from the source text is missing in the target text, as it has not been translated. El Saadawi employed a distinct narrative technique in this fixed introduction, where she adopted a first-person voice to express her own self-perceived inadequacy in writing introductions. In doing so, she established a personal connection with the reader and acknowledges her own limitations as an author. Furthermore, El Saadawi transitioned from the first-person perspective to the third-person perspective, referring to her "life companion" as a means of self-reflection. This narrative shift allowed El Saadawi to explore her identity and experiences as a writer from a broader perspective, offering insights into the creative and intellectual journey that she had.

**Example (3)**

Source Text
اسمها الثلاثي كان مسجلاً في أقسام وزارة الداخلية والشئون الاجتماعية ومصالحة السجون وإدارات الرقابة على

النشر والكتابة والمصنفات الفنية. يحملق ضابط الشرطة بمطار القاهرة في اسمها الثلاثي، يتأمل صورتها في جواز سفرها، يبتسم في وجهها: حمد لله ع السلامة يا أستاذة. يدق بالمطرقة على جواز سفرها فتدخل. وإن وصلت القائمة السوداء إليه قبل عودتها، يعتذر لها برقة ورثها عن أمه، يناولها كرسياً لتستريح وكوب ماء: آسف يا أستاذة، عندي أوامر لازم أنفذها (El-Saadawi, 2017, p.8).

The author's introduction refers to El Saadawi's personal, and often societal costs that female activists face when expressing their ideas and challenging established norms. Nevertheless, in Nawal Saadawi's unique style, her suffering was often narrated in a sarcastic manner. Through her writing, El Saadawi shed light on the difficulties and absurdities that female activists encounter in their pursuit of social change as seen in the example 3. These few lines typically addressed the challenges El Saadawi faced while moving from one country to another due to her reputation as a dangerous feminist activist writer. By removing the author's introduction, the translator effectively concealed El-Saadawi's suffering and her personal experience. Thus, this deliberate act of omission can be seen as a hijacking strategy employed to undermine the challenges and the cost of her writing. Instead of utilizing the hijacking strategy appropriately to advocate for women's voices, the translator or may be the publishing house chose to manipulate the narrative and suppress El Saadawi's voice.

#### Example (4)



**Figure 4.** A juvenile illustration drew by Nawal El Saadawi in 1944.

In example 4, the illustration, which was featured exclusively within the introductory pages of the Arabic version of the book, was omitted from the translated book. The image, bearing the title of the book at the top of the page and the name of the author and the year of writing, are listed at the bottom. The illustration comprised a juvenile sketch of two birds in flight above three blossoms, a sailboat carrying a child across the sea, two fish swimming in the waters, a radiant sun, and a palm tree, was accompanied by the caption, "This is the drawing that I had found on the cover of my copybook, and I elected to preserve it unaltered."

By omitting this illustration, the translated version loses a significant juvenile visual element that contributed to the overall atmosphere of the text. The absence of the image removes the opportunity for readers of the target text to visually connect with the author's nostalgic portrayal of the scene and the personal significance attached to it.

On the contrary, the translator hijacked the text and opted to start her translation with a comprehensive introduction spanning 27 pages. The introduction, which displayed the cogent title "Why is Nawal El Saadawi Banned?", was structured into five subheadings: The Making of A Legend; The Most Wanted Woman; Writing is the History of Oppression; Liberation of/from the Mind, and Creativity and Dissidence respectively. Amin's introduction served a multifaceted purpose. Initially, she provided a rationale for the condemnation, rejection, and provocation that Nawal Saadawi's works have continued to face. Through her introduction, Amin endeavored to enlighten the English reader on the kind of oppression, labeling, and rejection that El Saadawi had experienced as a result of her daring writings and her advocacy for liberation.

## 4. 2 Genette’s (1997) paratextual features

### 4.2.1 Epitext

The foremost significant paratextual feature in the selected source literary work was its title, and the initial procedure in this paratextual analysis involved a comparison of the title of the Arabic source text and its English translation as seen in example 5.

#### Example (5)

Source Text	Target Text
مذكرات طفلة اسمها سعاد	Diary of a Child Called Souad

The title of the source text foregrounded that the book was centered around the experiences of a female protagonist as marked by “ة” as in “طفلة” as seen in example 5. On the contrary, the title in the target text concealed the female identity by using the generic unmarked noun “child” which did not indicate that the story would be talking about a girl. The translator could have opted for “girl” instead.

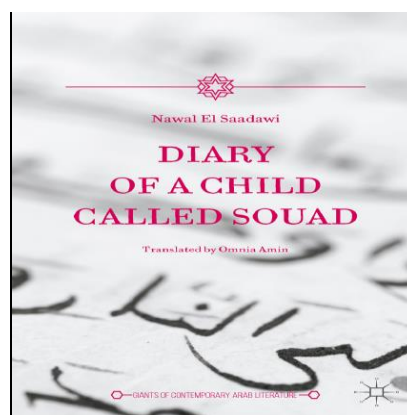
It is worth mentioning that El Saadawi (as translated by Amin, 2017) in her introduction that she decided to “publish these old papers and present them to every child (female or male) who has thoughts about writing or who develops a desire to do so. Much early talent is lost because of old, wornout educational institutions and customs, just as Souad’s talent was lost” (p. 26). This might have inspired the translator to opt for the word “child” to fulfill El Saadawi’s aim which was fostering creativity and dissidence in every child despite its gender.

Another significant paratextual feature was the cover of the source and target texts as seen in example 6.

#### Example (6)



**Figure 5.** Cover of the source text



**Figure 6.** Cover of the target text

text

The cover of a book held paramount importance in conditioning the reader for the contents that lie within. As seen in Figure 5, the depiction on the cover of the Arabic features Nawal El Saadawi as an old woman with grey short hair. The title of the book is written in cadet blue shade. It can be easily discerned a measure of incongruity between the cover design and the title of the book in question, as they seem to convey divergent or even opposing messages since the image was for an old woman, whereas the title was about a girl's memoir. Unlike the Arabic book, the cover of the translated book is emblazoned with an array of Arabic calligraphy, disclosing the name of the author at the top, the title of the book in the middle, and the name of the translator and the publishing house responsible for its production at the end (as illustrated in Figure 6). An additional observation to be made was that the contents of the English book were not immediately discernible from its cover despite the suggestive nature of the pink hue. It was not readily apparent from the cover design alone that the book would focus on the experiences of a female protagonist unlike the Arabic book.

### **Example (7)**

I [*the translator*] realized that her technique is simple but powerful. First, she arouses the passion and emotions of her audience to shock them out of the mundane level of thinking and seeing things. Second, she stretches their imagination to allow them to remove the veil from their eyes and accommodate new possibilities. To achieve this, she starts by using extremely provocative sentences. (...) The story of Souad is a courageous creative endeavor by the young El Saadawi to examine the double standards of her surroundings and critique not only her society but also herself. This young girl had the strength and vision to expose the hypocrisy of her own background and form the early budding of what she has become today. *Diary of a Child Called Souad* is, in fact, El Saadawi's first step on a long and arduous journey to show that the act of writing is an act of fighting oppression on personal, social, and political levels. The young Souad understood this, and the Nawal El Saadawi of today is a testimonial to it (Amin, 2017, pp. 2-4).

As seen in example 7, Amin's introduction had a strategic role as it provided guidance and explanation to the target reader about the writer of the original work.

Amin's opening lines in her introduction explained why she chose to translate this particular work. Amin (2017) elucidated that this book marked the beginning of El Saadawi's journey, where she found in the act of writing itself a powerful form of resistance against personal, social, and political oppression. Moreover, the translator's introduction prepared the reader for the theme of the translated book as Amin hints at the central theme of the work which is the critique of her society and its double standards, and the fight against oppression. Furthermore, example 7 served as a key component in setting the critical tone of the overall work. It suggested that the story of Souad is a courageous and creative endeavor that challenges societal norms and exposes double standards.

### **Example (8)**

Her book *The Novel* was banned all over the Arab world the same year it was released in Arabic in 2005. This was not the first time that El Saadawi's writings or declarations led to such violent actions being taken against her. In 2004, her book *The Fall of the Imam* was also banned; in 1980, following her activism toward bettering the lives of women and her efforts to empower women by bringing together their efforts in a woman's organization, she was thrown in prison at the end of the late President Sadat's regime. What is this one woman capable of that distinguishes her from other feminists and public speakers and writers? (...) In her book *Memoirs from the Women's Prison*, El Saadawi speaks for all of the women prisoners jailed with her, not for any crime, but for their thoughts and writing. (Amin, 2017, p. 5).

As seen in example 8, the translator's introduction tackled El Saadawi's works moving from one book to another to highlight how her outspokenness and sharp confrontations with authorities were the main reason for banning her books. Amin's introduction had served as a refutation to all the labels and condemnation that Saadawi's name had associated with. For instance, some of the accusations that she has faced include accusations of blasphemy and apostasy, indecency and incitement, and threats of national security. Accordingly, Amin (2017) debunked these accusations by explaining how El Saadawi's simple yet provocative style of writing was intended to dispel the obfuscation that shrouds people's sight and mind. She emphasized El Saadawi's repeated calls of self-liberation from all kinds of oppression.

#### **4.2.2 Peritext**

Amin utilized the last two chapters of the translated book as peritextual devices to provide the reader and the translated work with information concerning the author's cultural background, thereby enriching the target audience's understanding of both the author and the source text. In her English translation, Amin dedicated the fourth chapter to comprehensive timeline of El-Saadawi's bibliographical facts, whereas the fifth chapter was an interview the translator conducted it with the author before publishing the English translation.

Firstly, the title of Chapter 4 "Nawal El Saadawi and a History of Oppression: Brief Biographical Facts" foregrounded Nawal Saadawi's life under oppression. Moreover, Amin demonstrated a notable emphasis in the beginning of the peritext regarding Nawaal's mother's illiteracy and early marriage at the age of 15. The

translator was particularly inclined to highlight the banning and subsequent imprisonment of certain works by El Saadawi as well as the contrasting recognition given to her by the Western community. Furthermore, Amin was keen to underscore Al-Saadawi's dissidence, as she actively joined the mass protests that took place during the 25<sup>th</sup> January revolution.

- **Interview**

**Example (9)**

You once stated in an interview that children criticize God and religion because they have

common sense. Souad asks many questions and silently uncovers hypocrisy in her culture. Did

you hold this belief in mind when you were writing *Diary of A Child Called Souad*?

Yes, I was sensitive from childhood to paradoxes and contradiction in the life around me, at home, in the street, in school, on the radio, in books we read in school, including the Bible and Koran. I remember that other children in the family and my schoolmates shared my feelings about the hypocrisy everywhere around us, but we were not aware yet of why such hypocrisy exists in culture or religion or politics or other areas. (Amin, 2017, p.161)

Amin made the fifth chapter in her translated book for an interview that was conducted with Nawal El Saadawi in 2012 after its publication in 1990. The interview consisted of 12 questions which provided a site for Amin as a translator to be more visible to the readers on the one hand, and a site for the El Saadawi to respond to negative comments directed towards her religious critique on the other hand, particularly in relation to her book wherein the child protagonist—Souad—criticized God using common sense and exposed cultural hypocrisy. As seen in example 9, interviews as paratextual element serves as a platform for El Saadawi to reclaim authorial agency and engage in a discourse challenging societal norms.

**Example (10)**

My mother and father encouraged me to write poems and short stories. In fact, it was my mother who played a big role in the survival of *Diary of a Child Called Souad*, and my father, too. Both loved literature and imagination. Both were happy when my first collection of short stories *I Learned Love* was published as a book. They read many of these stories in magazines or journals before they were collected in the book (Amin, 2017, p. 161).

Example 10 is extracted from the translator's interview with Nawal El- Saadawi. This excerpt bears profound significance as it illuminates a crucial aspect of Saadawi's life.

Amin intentionally foregrounded El Saadawi's gratitude to her parents on one hand, and her country on the other hand. To elaborate, El Saadawi abstained from adopting a victimhood narrative, instead expressing gratitude towards her parents who fostered a conducive environment to her literary pursuits, even in light of her rural origins.

### **Example (11)**

I was able to publish a collection of my short stories in a book in 1957. Some of my articles which I collected and published in *Woman and Sex* were written during the 1950s when I was a medical student. At that time, I could not publish except in university magazines or other small journals. (Amin, 2017, p. 160)

In example 11, El Saadawi astutely acknowledged the fortuitousness of having her work published in university periodicals and modest journals. Such reflections by El Saadawi serve to underscore the complex interplay between socio-cultural circumstances, personal agency, and the opportunities that enabled her to establish herself as a notable writer. The interview explored whether the piece being discussed was Saadawi's first venture into writing. Amin inquired about the origins of her work, seeking to understand the context in which her literary journey began. El Saadawi revealed that her first piece of writing was a collection of short stories titled "I Learned Love," published in 1957. This revelation set the stage for further inquiries into her literary journey. Amin then shifted the focus towards the genre of Saadawi's work, prompting a discussion on whether it belonged to the realm of fiction or non-fiction. El Saadawi reflected on her writing style, explaining the creative liberties she employed while incorporating elements of real-life experiences and socio-cultural observations. This exploration of genre helped elucidate the nuanced nature of Saadawi's literary voice.

### **5. General Remarks**

One of the most remarkable observations in Amin's translation is the complete absence of footnotes, which is particularly striking considering the presence of numerous culturally specific elements within the text. This deliberate choice by Amin has implications for the portrayal of Arabs and their representation in Western contexts. It is plausible that the translator made this decision with the intention of avoiding excessive foreignization of the text as an abundance of footnotes can serve to underscore the reader's awareness of their distinct cultural background in relation to that of the text. However, Amin tended to foreignize some of the culture specific items as in the word "طربوش / tarbush", "جالابية/ galabiya", and "الجنية/jinny". The translator used to transliterate the culture-specific items without providing any explanation to them. Consequently, rather than fostering a sense of proximity, the use of footnotes can accentuate the differences between the reader and the text, potentially hindering their ability to bridge the cultural gap.

Another remark is that the English translation lacks Flotows' (1993) supplementing translation strategy. Amin exhibited a deliberate avoidance of employing the supplementary gender strategy within her English translation, particularly in instances where it could have served to illuminate gender biases present



in the original text. This decision by the translator resulted in a missed opportunity to underscore and draw attention to gender-related disparities within the English version as can be seen in example 12.

### Example (12)

Source Text	Target Text
<p>لم تكن تعرف بعدُ ماذا تعني كلمة فلاح أو بندري أو موظف، لكنها كانت تظن أن عمته خديجة تحبها أكثر مما تحب ابنها زكي، أو أي أحد من أولادها، لكنها تحب أباها أكثر مما تحبها، وتعطيه الحمارة ليركبها ولا تعطيه لها، وتقول لها: الولد يركب والبنت تمشي؛ لأنَّ البنت في رجليها حديد.</p> <p>(El Saadawi, 1990, p. 23)</p>	<p>She does not know yet what the words <i>peasant</i> and <i>city</i> imply, not even the word <i>employee</i>. But she thinks that her Aunt Khadija loves her more than she loves her son Zaki or any of her other children.</p> <p>But she loves her brother more than her because she gives him the <b>donkey</b> to ride and does not give it to her. She tells her:</p> <p><i>The boy rides and the girl walks, because girls have iron in their feet.</i> (Amin, 2017, p. 41)</p>

In the Arabic source text, El Saadawi used a female donkey as a symbolic representation to convey the notion that femininity is central to the essence of life in the countryside. However, in the English translation, Amin deviates from this representation by using unmarked generic noun ‘donkey’ instead of the female one. It is plausible that the translator's decision to abstain from utilizing the term "jenny" as a translation for the female donkey stems from concerns of potential awkwardness. Nevertheless, an alternative approach could have been to employ the supplementary strategy, wherein the translator could have provided an explanatory note clarifying the cultural context wherein Egyptian farmers commonly refer to donkeys as female, despite their biological sex, due to their utilization in physically demanding tasks and their perceived lack of intelligence.

## 6. Conclusion

The primary focus of this research paper centers on the examination of the loss incurred during the process of translation, specifically in relation to the utilization of gender translation strategies and translating the paratextual elements of any literary work. These strategies and elements play a crucial role in the determination and selection of what is going to be lost in translation, ultimately serving to foreground specific ideologies or perspectives.

By consciously selecting and translating texts that explore gender-related themes and experiences, translators can contribute to a broader discourse on gender equality and empowerment. Through the act of translation, translators have the power to amplify marginalized voices, challenge societal norms, and foster a more inclusive and equitable understanding of gender. Consequently, it can be concluded that Amin produced a version of the Al-Saadawi's work that aligns with culturally and ideologically accepted norms in the Western context, potentially perpetuating Western stereotypes and she tended to foreground the life and experience of El Saadawi as a female rebellious female writer who challenges the patriarchal society.

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