

## **Word Manipulation in Male Translations of Female-Authored Literature**

### **Manipulação de Palavras em Traduções Masculinas de Literatura Escrita por Mulheres**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study examines how gender and cultural factors influence word manipulation in the Arabic translations of Toni Morrison's novel *Paradise* (1998) by Tawfiq Al-Asadi (target text 1, TT1) and Ali Basha (target text 2, TT2). Employing a comparative textual analysis informed by feminist translation theory and critical discourse analysis (CDA), this study investigates how the translators' backgrounds and ideological perspectives shape their lexical choices, narrative techniques, and character portrayals in selected passages of the novel. The analysis uncovers distinct differences in translation strategies; Al-Asadi frequently reduces narrative depth through omissions and simplifications, while Basha introduces ideological shifts that reflect specific cultural and gendered biases. These translational choices significantly alter readers' interpretations and perceptions of characters and thematic elements. Ultimately, this research highlights the significant role translators play in shaping literary reception across cultures, advocating for a more critical and detail-sensitive approach to translation studies, one that acknowledges translator subjectivity and its broader implications for cross-cultural literary understanding.

**KEYWORDS:** Arabic translations, comparative textual analysis, feminist translation, critical discourse analysis, gender representation, Toni Morrison, word manipulation

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**RESUMO:** Este estudo analisa como os fatores de género e culturais influenciam a manipulação lexical nas traduções árabes do romance *Paradise* (1998), de Toni Morrison, realizadas por Tawfiq Al-Asadi (texto-alvo 1, TA1) e Ali Basha (texto-alvo 2, TA2). Através de uma análise textual comparativa, sustentada pela teoria feminista da tradução e pela análise crítica do discurso (ACD), investiga-se de que modo os percursos pessoais e as perspetivas ideológicas dos tradutores moldam as suas escolhas linguísticas, estratégias narrativas e representações das personagens em passagens selecionadas da obra. A análise revela diferenças marcantes nas estratégias adotadas; Al-Asadi tende a reduzir a profundidade narrativa por meio de omissões e simplificações, enquanto Basha introduz alterações ideológicas que refletem preconceitos culturais e de género específicos. Estas decisões de tradução influenciam significativamente a forma como os leitores interpretam e percebem as personagens e os temas do romance. Em suma, esta investigação sublinha o papel determinante do tradutor na receção literária entre culturas, apelando a uma abordagem mais crítica e atenta aos detalhes nos estudos de tradução, que reconheça a subjetividade do tradutor e as suas implicações no entendimento literário intercultural.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** traduções árabes, análise textual comparativa, tradução feminista, análise crítica do discurso, representação de género, Toni Morrison, manipulação de palavras

## **Introduction**

Literary translation is widely regarded as one of the most complex forms of translation due to the intricate features of literary texts, which extend beyond mere word meaning to include connotations, stylistic nuances, and cultural depth. This complexity often demands extensive *word manipulation*, driven by linguistic, cultural, ideological, and subjective factors. The primary linguistic challenges stem from the specificity of literary language, which is rich in figurative expressions, idioms, and stylistic innovation (Aubakir et al., 2024). Consequently, translators must navigate phonological, syntactic, lexical, and semantic disparities while striving to preserve the style and effect of the original text. This manipulation requires not only linguistic skills but also a profound familiarity with both literary traditions (Yousef, 2012). Moreover, cultural barriers add another layer of difficulty, as literary works are deeply embedded in their cultural contexts and act as intersections of time and identity (Astrakhan, 2021). Translation thus becomes a cultural negotiation, where the translator must substitute culture-bound expressions without distorting the original's meaning. To ensure clarity and resonance in the target culture (TC), this process often involves lexical shifts and a careful balance between domestication and foreignization (Bołtuć, 2021), highlighting the translator's creative role in

making literature accessible across cultures. In many cases, translators function as intercultural mediators, adapting both text and context for the target audience (Liddicoat, 2016).

Within this framework, the present study investigates the influence of gender and cultural factors on word manipulation in translation. It is a comparative textual analysis of two Arabic translations of Toni Morrison's novel *Paradise* (ST) by Tawfiq Al-Asadi (TT1) and Ali Basha (TT2). We aim to examine how these two Arab *male* translators consciously or unconsciously utilize word-manipulation strategies to alter the representation of female characters and the female narrative in a female-authored work. Additionally, we explore how cultural norms and societal expectations within Arab communities influence these translation choices, shedding light on the intersection of language, gender, and cultural context. In doing so, we consider whether male translators might project patriarchal perspectives onto such a text, given that Morrison's novels often center on black female experiences and critique patriarchal structures. Ultimately, this research determines how gender and societal influences play out in the strategies and outcomes of these translators, especially within culturally and ideologically sensitive texts. The study addresses the following research questions:

- How do Arab translators use word manipulation to reshape characterization, particularly the voice, agency, and moral positioning of female characters, in their Arabic translations of Morrison's *Paradise*?
- How do cultural norms and societal expectations in Arab communities shape these translators' lexical, stylistic, and ideological choices, and how do such pressures influence their overall translation strategies in *Paradise*?

## **1. Literature Review**

### **1.1 Word Manipulation in Translation**

Word manipulation in translation helps convey meaning, facilitate cultural adaptation, and address linguistic constraints. Accordingly, translation rarely functions as a strict replication of the source text (ST); instead, it operates as a socially sanctioned representation produced within the TC. Lefevere (2016) argues that manipulation is intrinsic to translation because translators work under multiple influences, including ideological, cultural, and personal pressures, all of which inevitably shape how a text is rewritten in another language. Moreover, these influences, often rooted in socio-political contexts and cultural expectations, can trigger conscious or unconscious textual changes (Kramina, 2004; Klimovich, 2015). This becomes even more pronounced in politically sensitive environments where censorship or self-censorship is widespread (Ivanytska, 2021). For instance, translators working under authoritarian systems or strict cultural norms may omit controversial references or modify language to avoid clashing with the values of the TC. In this regard, manipulation

may involve omitting or substituting intertextual and culture-specific references so that the translation aligns more closely with target-culture norms (Alekseeva, 2001). Likewise, translation is frequently an act of rewriting shaped by the translator's interpretive framework (Abdelnasser, 2018), which means translators may recalibrate or filter content to meet the receiving audience's expectations.

At the same time, word manipulation intersects with broader translation strategies, particularly domestication and foreignization. While domestication prioritizes fluency and reduces the perceived foreignness of the ST, foreignization preserves that foreignness more deliberately (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014). Consequently, manipulation can be understood as operating along a spectrum between these approaches, since different segments of a text may be domesticated or foreignized to varying degrees. For example, a translator may domesticate culture-bound terms or allusions in one passage yet retain foreign names or concepts in another, depending on the intended effect. In addition, Dukāte (2007) and Pym (1992) observe that translators sometimes adjust their strategies across different readerships or editions, tailoring translations for children versus adults, or for general readers versus specialists. Importantly, these shifts are not necessarily deceptive; rather, they often reflect genuine efforts to bridge cultural incongruities between source and target contexts. Nevertheless, evaluating such choices requires attention to reception in the TC as compared with the source culture (SC) (Dukāte, 2007), because what appears as clarification for one readership may be judged as distortion by another. Indeed, manipulation is sometimes associated with distortion, particularly when modifications are seen as misrepresenting the ST and therefore become unacceptable in the TC, which highlights the controversial nature of the practice. Classic translation studies scholars (e.g., Hermans and Lefevere) have emphasized that every translation entails some degree of ideological filtering or manipulation; however, it becomes problematic when the translation shifts the original intent or tone to the point that it is no longer recognizable (Lefevere, 2016). Recent research reinforces this view. For instance, Bian and Li (2022) argue that translation is inherently shaped by the translator's socio-cultural context and prevailing ideologies, creating a dialectical relationship in which ideology influences translation and, in turn, translation can shape ideological perspectives.

## **1.2 Gender, Culture, and Translation**

Gender and culture complicate translation and word manipulation by turning translation into a space where gendered meanings and power relations are negotiated. Chamberlain's (1988) well-known metaphor, for instance, frames the translator as a patriarchal authority within a discourse in which the ST is often feminized and imagined as needing *protection* or domination by the (frequently male) translator. Building on this view, Peretz (1992) argues that a translator's gender identity and social positioning can shape translational decisions, including situations in which a male translator may

unconsciously filter a female author's voice through a gendered lens. Such arguments anticipate feminist translation theory in the 1990s. Simon (1996) critiques traditional practices for erasing women's presence and calls for strategies that make women's voices visible, while von Flotow (1991, 1997) proposes tactics such as *prefacing*, *footnoting*, and *hijacking* to assert female agency in translation (Irshad & Yasmin, 2022). Furthermore, von Flotow (1997) describes patriarchal translation as a mode of intervention through which male translators may diminish or distort a female author's message, including the omission of women-centered passages or the softening of feminist rhetoric as a form of patriarchal control.

Gender-sensitive and gender-neutral rendering further highlights the translator's mediating role. Hirschauer (2001) and Livia (2001) show that moving between differently gendered language systems forces decisions that can either reproduce bias or challenge it. For example, an English gender-ambiguous subject (the teacher said...) often requires gender marking in Arabic, which obliges the translator to assign a gender that is not explicit in the source. As Berezhna (2020) notes, social norms and internalized bias can produce unintended gender shifts even when no overt change is required, for instance, through stereotyped lexical choices or the reweighting of descriptions, such as overemphasizing a woman's appearance or softening a strong female voice.

Ideology is therefore central because a translator's stance, whether feminist, patriarchal, or otherwise, shapes outcomes (Heger, 2011). In addition, target-culture expectations may encourage translators to tone down or reframe feminist content in conservative contexts (Cascallana, 2006). Venuti (2011) likewise stresses that translators are active meaning-producers, and that decisions about literalness, paraphrase, or omission can redirect interpretation, especially in overtly gendered texts. Consequently, the equivalent effect aim becomes harder to achieve in gendered discourse, since translators must preserve core meanings while also finding culturally workable forms (Dabaghi & Bagheri, 2012).

Religious and historical examples further illustrate how patriarchal phrasing can persist in translation. In Bible translation debates, masculine-biased generics such as "man" often remain even after inclusive revisions (Bibb, 2014). Similar tensions arise with idioms, which are culturally rooted; as Larson (1997) notes, literal translation may fail, yet freer renderings can shift connotations. When idioms encode gender stereotypes, translators must decide between preservation and adaptation, and Secovnic (2012) cautions that leaving them unadapted can reproduce stereotypes in the TC.

Recent studies likewise indicate that gender consciousness and ideology shape translation decisions (Irshad & Yasmin, 2022). Comparative work frequently reports patterned differences. Hsin (2012) suggests that female Chinese translators tend to intervene more explicitly and insert their own identity, whereas male translators may make women's voices less visible. Tang (2018) similarly finds

that a female translator strengthened women's awakening in an English-to-Chinese novel translation, while a male translator omitted awakening-related phrasing, reflecting an androcentric orientation. Li (2020) also reports a stronger feminist consciousness in some female translators' renderings of women's inner experiences, in contrast to male translators' tendency to downplay gender nuance. More broadly, translations may be ideologically slanted toward patriarchal or feminist directions (Leonardi, 2007), with shifts materializing through lexical choices, characterization strategies, and the use of notes or commentary to foreground women's perspectives. However, Moghaddas (2013) finds no significant gender-based accuracy differences in English-to-Persian novel translation. Even so, ideology can remain decisive, as shown by Shaheen et al. (2021) in an Urdu translation where patriarchal positioning emerges through subtle grammatical and lexical choices. Related work also contrasts feminist-leaning and status-quo orientations across translators, as in Mingli's (2021) comparison of two Chinese translations of *To the Lighthouse*, where the male version domesticates the heroine toward culturally idealized norms while the female version projects a more emancipatory angle. Mohammadi (2014) reports a parallel pattern in Persian translations of *Mrs. Dalloway*, with diminishing equivalents in the male translator's choices and more empowering ones in the female translator's rendering.

## 2. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative design based on comparative textual analysis. It is informed by feminist translation studies and CDA, allowing us to examine how gender, ideology, and power relations surface through translation choices. Feminist translation theory was used to track possible reshaping of a female-authored voice and potential patriarchal filtering, while CDA guided our analysis of how lexical and syntactic patterns encode or challenge dominant ideologies (Fairclough, 2013; Lazar, 2005). In this sense, the translations are treated as socially situated discourses rather than neutral reproductions. The corpus comprises purposively selected passages from Morrison's *Paradise* and their counterparts in two Arabic translations: TT1 by Tawfiq Al-Asadi and TT2 by Ali Basha. Because both translators are male, translator gender is held constant while differences in strategy and ideological positioning are explored. Passages were chosen for dense gendered and cultural content (female characterization, relationships, culturally marked references, figurative language, and relevant dialogue), consistent with feminist textual analysis that prioritizes segments where voice and representation are most contested (Simon, 1996; von Flotow, 1997). We first conducted a side-by-side ST–TT1–TT2 comparison and documented divergences in lexis, syntax, meaning, register, and tone. We then identified observable manipulation patterns (for example, omission, addition, substitution, shifts in gender/number marking, changes in formality, intensification or softening, and replacement

of culture-specific items). These patterns were interpreted through (a) feminist questions about shifts in female voice, agency, stereotyping, and possible *patriarchal translation* effects (von Flotow, 1997), and (b) CDA questions about evaluation, subject positioning and agency, and linguistic signals of hierarchy (such as honorifics or derogation) that may recalibrate power relations (Fairclough, 2013; Lazar, 2005). Throughout, we treated differences between TT1 and TT2 as evidence of distinct readings of the same source, rather than grounds for ranking translations as “better” or “worse.”

The analysis is interpretive and passage-based rather than exhaustive, and we had no direct access to translators’ commentaries; therefore, claims about motivation rely on textual evidence and contextual knowledge. Despite this, applying the same criteria and lenses to both translations supports consistency and makes the comparative results meaningful within the study’s scope.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Our analysis of the two Arabic translations of *Paradise* confirms that literary translation is inherently ideological (Bian & Li, 2022). The translators’ choices, shaped by cultural norms and personal perspectives, often manipulate language in ways that subtly shift tone and character portrayal, influencing how readers interpret the story. As Klimovich (2015) argues, translators work under pressure either to conform to or challenge audience norms, while manipulation may be intentional or unintentional, with clear consequences for gender representation (Kramina, 2004). The results are presented through selected examples (Tables 1–7) and discussed in terms of culturally and gender-oriented strategies and biases.

ST	
To her of the bleeding heart and bottomless love. To her quae sine tactu pudoris. To the beata viscera Mariae Virginis. (p. 225)	
TT1	TT2
لها القلب الدامي والحب الذي لا قرار له. (ص. 329)	لها هي ذات القلب النازف والحب الذي لا قرار له، و الذي بلا دنس حبلت به الطوباوية البتول مريم العذراء. (ص. 298).

**Table 1.** A dedication to the Virgin Mary, expressed in Latin

In Table 1, a line dedicates something to a figure with “the bleeding heart and bottomless love,” followed by two Latin phrases (*quae sine tactu pudoris* and *beata viscera Mariae Virginis*) referencing the Virgin Mary. These Latin phrases imbue the original text with religious and cultural depth, evoking Catholic imagery. TT1 (Al-Asadi) translates the first part of the dedication as *لها القلب الدامي والحب الذي لا قرار له* (lahā al-qalb al-dāmī wa-al-ḥubb alladī lā qarār lahu), which accurately captures “the bleeding

heart and love that has no end”. However, TT1 omits the Latin phrases entirely, making no mention of Mary or any equivalent reference. TT2 (Basha), on the other hand, renders the passage as *لها هي ذات القلب النازف والحب الذي لا قرار له، والذي بلا دنس حُبِّت به الطوباوية البتول مريم العذراء* (lahā hiya dātu al-qalb al-nāzif wa-al-ḥubb alladī lā qarār lahu, wa-alladī bilā danas ḥubilat bihi al-ṭūbāwiyyatu al-batūl Maryam al-‘adrā’). This translation not only includes “the bleeding heart and bottomless love,” but also attempts to convey the essence of the Latin phrases by referencing the Virgin Mary (Maryam al-‘Adhrā’) and her immaculate conception (using phrases meaning “without blemish, she conceived, the Beatified Virgin Mary”).

The stark contrast, omission in TT1 versus approximation in TT2, is consequential. TT1’s omission of *quae sine tactu pudoris* and *beata viscera Mariae Virginis* erases an intertextual link to Catholic lore, simplifying the translation and arguably shielding target readers from obscure Latin references in a Muslim-majority context. This aligns with a domestication impulse that avoids the “elaborate linguistic explanation” such items may require (Allaithy, 2020). Critically, this is a manipulative exclusion of an intertextual marker, a common outcome when translators confront an intertextual barrier and opt for omission rather than explanation (Alekseeva, 2001; Allaithy, 2020). It also removes a layer of feminine symbolism, since the Marian dedication invokes a revered female figure, even within a patriarchal tradition. By contrast, TT2 preserves the religious-cultural depth by translating sense rather than Latin form, explicitly naming Mary and using resonant terms like *al-ṭūbāwiyyah* and *al-batūl*, compatible with Arab Christian usage and Islamic reverence for Maryam, including *Maryam al-‘Adhrā’*. The bleeding-heart imagery is retained and clarified with *nāzif*, so TT2 maintains the sacral tone and keeps the reader inside Morrison’s intertextual space.

The choices in Table 1 reflect two different translatorial *ideologies*. TT1’s approach shows a tendency toward simplification and possibly an assumption that the target readers do not need or want the Latin/Catholic context – this aligns with a domesticating strategy and perhaps an *avoidance of religious complexity*. This could also be influenced by the cultural context: an Arab Muslim reader might not catch a Latin phrase’s meaning, and Al-Asadi could have decided it wasn’t worth the effort to preserve. However, from a critical standpoint, such omission diminishes the richness of the text and can be seen as a loss of the female religious element (the Virgin Mary) in the narrative tapestry. TT2’s approach, by contrast, can be interpreted as a more *faithful or foreignizing* strategy – Basha goes the extra mile to deliver a sense of the foreign element (Latin/Christian reference), understandably. This maintains the novel’s cultural layering and arguably respects the presence of a venerated female figure. It also hints that Basha may be more comfortable or knowledgeable about Christian references, or at least more willing to engage with them for the sake of completeness. In terms of gender representation, while neither translation explicitly changes a female character here, the handling of a female symbol

(Mary) differs; that is, TT2 acknowledges Mary’s presence, TT1 effectively *silences* it. In feminist translation terms, one might say TT2 avoids *erasing* a feminine reference, whereas TT1’s omission could be viewed (however unintentionally) as an act that *renders the female element invisible*. The divergent outcomes exemplify how word manipulation can lead to texts with different ideological hues: TT1 produces a leaner text but with reduced intertextual resonance, whereas TT2 produces a culturally richer text that readers may perceive as more exotic or heavier.

ST	
Reverend Misner had everyone’s attention and just a few words more to offer. (p. 305)	
TT1	TT2
كان القس ميسنر يحظى باهتمام الجميع ولم يتبق لديه سوى كلمات قليلة يقولها. (ص. 442)	كان المحترم ميسنر يسترعي انتباه الجميع ولم يكن قد بقي لديه سوى بضع كلمات يقولها. (ص. 398).

**Table 2.** Reverend Misner’s final remarks

In Table 2, the title “Reverend” indicates his role as a clergy member and carries a formal respect in English. TT1 translates this sentence closely as: *كان القس ميسنر يحظى باهتمام الجميع ولم يتبق لديه سوى كلمات قليلة يقولها* (kāna al-qiss Mīsinar yahẓā bi-ihtimām al-jamī‘ wa-lam yatbaqqa ladayhi siwā kalimāt qalīla yaqūluhā). Here, *al-qiss* is a direct equivalent for “Reverend” or “priest,” appropriately reflecting Misner’s religious role, and the rest of the sentence is a faithful rendition of having everyone’s attention and only a few words left. TT1’s choice maintains both the content and tone of the original, presenting Misner factually and neutrally as the narrative does. TT2, however, introduces a notable addition: *كان المحترم ميسنر يسترعي انتباه الجميع ولم يكن قد بقي لديه سوى بضع كلمات يقولها* (kāna al-muḥtaram Mīsinar yastarī‘ intibāh al-jamī‘ wa-lam yakun qad baqiya ladayhi siwā biḍ‘ kalimāt yaqūluhā). The significant deviation is the use of *المحترم* (al-muḥtaram), meaning “the respected,” before Misner’s name. This word does not appear in the ST; it is an *embellishment* added by Basha.

The addition of *al-muḥtaram* imparts a tone of increased respect or formality to Misner’s title, effectively turning “Reverend Misner” into “the respected Misner” or “Mr. Misner, the respected” in nuance. This subtle word choice has multiple layers of significance. Culturally, addressing or referencing someone as “al-muḥtaram” in Arabic is a way to denote high esteem; it is somewhat akin to saying “the honorable” in English, though used more colloquially in Arabic for officials or elders. Basha’s decision to include this term suggests he wanted to underscore Misner’s status or dignity within the community – perhaps reflecting an Arab cultural norm of showing deference to religious figures or elders by default. It might also reflect the translator’s personal inclination to ensure that a

man of the cloth is treated with verbal respect in translation, even if the ST itself does not explicitly do so. From a critical discourse viewpoint, TT2's choice here indicates the translator inserting an evaluative stance: the narration now subtly endorses Misner as someone worthy of respect, whereas the English original leaves that judgment to the reader (or to be inferred from context). This aligns with the notion that translators, wittingly or not, can introduce *honorifics or epithets* that reveal their cultural perspective. This is a case of the translator's visibility (Venuti, 2011), as Basha's voice becomes apparent through an addition that is not literally present in the source text.

The impact on the character portrayal is important. In the novel, Reverend Misner is a young progressive preacher who, throughout the story, clashes with the older conservative men of Ruby (the town) because of his ideas and his influence on the younger generation. The original line simply sets the scene that he has the floor and is about to finish speaking. By calling him “المحترم ميسنر,” TT2 may inadvertently paint Misner in a more uniformly positive light, as if the narrative itself respects him highly. This could slightly obscure the nuance that, within the story, *not everyone in Ruby respects Misner* – indeed, the town's patriarchs are suspicious of him. TT1, by sticking to “القس ميسنر” (the Reverend Misner), remains factual and thus closer to the novel's subtle balance (we know he is a Reverend, which already implies some respect, but we are not told “the revered Reverend,” so to speak). TT2's embellishment might lead an Arabic reader to assume Misner is a universally revered figure, potentially blunting the irony that some in the community deeply distrust him. Thus, TT2's manipulation here shifts the tone: it adds a cultural gloss of respectability that is not explicitly in the original, which ultimately *changes the reader's perception* of Reverend Misner's character arc. What was, in the ST, a neutral narrative moment becomes in TT2 an affirmation of Misner's status.

Why might Basha have done this? One reason could be the translator's sensitivity to how religious titles are handled in Arabic. In English, “Reverend” inherently carries respect; in Arabic, *al-qiss* is a straightforward term for a priest or minister but does not, on its own, carry an honorific. Sometimes translators add *حضرة* (ḥaḍrat, roughly “His Reverence” or “His Presence”) or *المحترم* to convey the respect that “Reverend” implies. It is possible that Basha felt *al-qiss* alone might not communicate the deference due to a clergyman, thus adding *al-muḥtaram*. This appears to be a culturally driven move to ensure Arabic readers read “Reverend Misner” as a respected figure, much like an imam or priest, and it may also reflect Basha's generally formal style. Even though it is not about a female character, it shows how a patriarchal courtesy norm can be added to the text by elevating a male authority figure. The key question is whether a comparable female authority would receive the same honorific; if not, TT2 may subtly privilege male authority through intensified respect.

ST	
They think they have outfoxed the whiteman when in fact they imitate him. They think they are protecting their wives and children, when in fact they are maiming them. And when the maimed children ask for help, they look elsewhere for the cause. (p. 306)	
TT1	TT2
يظنون أنهم خدعوا الرجل الأبيض ولكنهم يقلدونه في الحقيقة. يظنون أنهم يحمون زوجاتهم وأطفالهم، حين يشوهونهم في الواقع. وحين يطلب الأطفال المشوهون المساعدة، يبحثون في مكان آخر عن السبب. (ص. 442)	يظنون أنهم أكثر خبثاً من الرجل الأبيض بينما هم في الحقيقة يقلدونه. ويعتقدون أنهم يحمون نساءهم وأطفالهم، في حين أنهم في الحقيقة يشوهونهم. وعندما يطلب الأولاد المشوهون الغوث، يسعون إلى مكان آخر بحثاً عن السبب (ص. 399).

**Table 3.** A dialogue between Reverend Misner and Deacon Morgan about the impact of the men's violence on Ruby

In a critical dialogue between Reverend Misner and Deacon Morgan (two male characters) about the violent actions of Ruby's men, the ST uses the verb "outfoxed" and explicitly mentions "wives and children." Specifically, the ST line is: "*They think they have outfoxed the white man when in fact they imitate him. They think they are protecting their wives and children, when in fact they are maiming them.*" (p. 306). This is a loaded statement addressing how the men of Ruby, in attacking the Convent, believe they are clever and protective, but are actually just as cruel as white oppressors, harming their own families.

Several differences stand out. For "outfoxed," TT1 uses *خدعوا* (*khada'ū* – "they deceived/tricked"), whereas TT2 uses *أكثر خبثاً* (*akthar khubthan* – "more cunning"). The idiom "outfoxed" in English connotes cleverness in a sly way. *Khada'ū* implies deceit, potentially losing the nuance of cleverness; it emphasizes the act of tricking. *Akthar khubthan* explicitly means "more sly/cunning (than)," preserving the comparative aspect ("more than the white man") and the slyness connotation more strongly than TT1's phrasing. In effect, TT2 captures the original's implication that the men think themselves smarter in a sly way, while TT1's version focuses on the idea of having tricked someone. TT2's *أكثر خبثاً* aligns more closely with the cunning outwitting implied in the ST, arguably delivering the reproachful tone (they fancy themselves craftier than white oppressors) more sharply.

The second notable difference is the translation of "wives." TT1 uses *زوجاتهم* (*zawjātuhum* – "their wives"). TT2 uses *نساءهم* (*nisā'ahum* – "their women"). Both translators keep "children" as *أطفالهم* (their children), so the discrepancy is in how "wives" is rendered. TT1's *zawjātuhum* is a precise equivalent to "their wives," maintaining the focus on spousal relationships. TT2's choice *nisā'ahum* is broader, literally "their women," which could mean "the women (belonging) to them" – a term that might include wives but is not restricted to marital partners. In Arabic, *nisā'* can generally mean

“women,” but contextually “their women” would typically be understood as the women of their community or family (wives, daughters, perhaps even other female kin). TT2’s phrasing thus generalizes the statement: instead of specifically saying they think they are protecting their wives (which directly points to a husband’s duty to a wife), it says they think they are protecting *their women* (which could imply an overarching patriarchal claim over all women under their care/protection).

This linguistic broadening in TT2 has interesting implications. It extends the scope of the men’s perceived protective role from just spouses to women in general. On one hand, this could reflect an Arabic collocation choice – Arab speakers might commonly say “our women and children” in contexts where English says “our wives and children,” especially in a patriarchal or tribal context. In many Arabic dialects, *nisā’-nā* (our women) is a collective way to refer to the women of one’s group (often implying wives, sisters, and daughters collectively). So Basha’s choice might be influenced by a *cultural translation strategy*: rendering the phrase into what a target reader might expect a man to say in that cultural setting. If men in a traditional community would speak of protecting “our women and children,” then TT2 aligns with that idiom, whereas “our wives and children” might sound oddly specific in Arabic. Nevertheless, TT2’s نساءهم can also be seen as a *more patriarchal phrasing*. It frames women as a homogeneous category under male possession (“their women”), potentially diminishing the individual identity of “wives.” The term “wives” highlights a specific relationship and perhaps a specific obligation (a husband’s duty to his wife). The term “women” is more generic and can carry connotations of *property* or *wardship* in a patriarchal sense. Indeed, saying “their women” almost objectifies; it is something one might say in a context of male protectors and female dependents in a broad stroke. This could inadvertently amplify the patriarchal tone of the men’s attitude – they see all women as *theirs to protect (or control)*, not just their own spouse. TT1’s use of “wives” keeps it personal and perhaps a bit more empathetic to the familial unit; TT2’s “their women” makes it a statement about gender roles at large, which might subtly reinforce the notion that women are a collective responsibility/possession of men.

Interestingly, this has a double-edged effect. It might make the critique in the narrative broader: not only are they maiming their wives and children, but by phrasing it as “women and children,” TT2 could be interpreted as saying they harm the women (all women in their community) and children. This hits a common phrase, “women and children,” which is often used to evoke innocence and the duty of protection. TT2 thus taps into that trope. But one might critique that *by changing wives to women, TT2 loses a bit of the pointedness that these men are actually harming their own wives* – a betrayal of the most intimate trust. TT1 preserves that notion: the men think they protect their wives but are actually maiming *their wives*, which underscores a tragic irony at the family level. TT2’s formulation could be read as the men harming women generally (which is also true in context, since

the victims are “the Convent women,” not the attackers’ own wives). This raises an intriguing point, as in the story, the men of Ruby kill women who are *not* their wives (they massacre the Convent women, who are outsiders). By saying “wives” in the original, the novel is metaphorical or indirect: it implies that by committing violence, the men end up hurting their own families (morally or indirectly, because their children witness violence, or because violence begets harm back home). TT1 keeps that metaphor intact – it is somewhat figurative since physically they are not maiming their wives in that scene, but spiritually/psychologically the community’s women and children suffer. TT2 by saying “their women” could be read more literally as well – since the Convent women are not “their women” in a marital sense, TT2’s phrasing might be aligning the object of protection (and eventual harm) more with the actual victims: the women (Convent women) who, once attacked, cause even the attackers’ wives/daughters to eventually suffer loss? It is a bit complex. But likely Basha intended it as the idiomatic “women and children” grouping.

From a feminist translation angle, *both* translations exhibit interesting facets. TT1’s retention of “wives” keeps focus on the marital relationship, which could be seen as preserving the gender-specific aspect (they are men failing their wives). TT2’s broader term “women” could be seen as either diluting the specificity of wives (perhaps unconsciously diminishing the particular importance of wives) or as capturing a patriarchal worldview where women are not even individually acknowledged, just lumped together. In either case, there are shifts; TT1 preserves a specific gender role term, TT2 generalizes it. This is a form of lexical manipulation that has subtle interpretive consequences, especially in a text deeply concerned with gender relations. One might argue that TT2’s generalization is *less feminist*, since it downplays the particular plight of wives (often central in feminist discussions of domestic patriarchy) and speaks in broader terms that, in patriarchal discourse, often serve to depersonalize women.

On the other hand, TT2’s choice might connect with an Arabic reader’s expectations and thus come across as a more natural expression, potentially making the critique more accessible. After all, “protecting women and children” is a common phrase denoting chivalric duty. Basha may have thought that “protecting their wives and children” sounded a bit unusual, whereas “protecting their women and children” hits the familiar register.

Finally, both translations translate the latter part “when in fact they are maiming them” similarly (بشئ هونهم — “maiming/distorting them”), capturing the brutality (though “maiming” physically the children is metaphorical—they scar them emotionally or ruin their future). Both TT1 and TT2 mirror that structure, with TT1 using حين (when) and TT2 using في حين (while/when), which is essentially the same function. One minor difference is that TT1 repeats يظنون (they think) in the second sentence, TT2 switches the second to ويعتقدون (and they believe). This is a stylistic variation –

Arabic often alternates synonyms for elegance, while English reused “They think” twice for emphasis. TT2’s variation is fine and does not change meaning; TT1’s repetition is closer to the original rhetorical effect.

ST	
What, he wonders, could do this to women? How can their plain brains think up such things? (p. 8)	
TT1	TT2
ما الذي يفعله هذا للنساء؟ كيف لأدمغتهن البسيطة أن تفكر في مثل هذه الأمور؟ (ص. 18)	وأخذ يتساءل: ماذا يمكن أن تفعل حقاً هؤلاء النسوة؟ وكيف استطاع دماغهن البسيط جداً تخيل مثل هذه الأشياء؟ (ص. 20)

**Table 4.** *A man's bewilderment at the women's behaviour and abilities*

Early in *Paradise*, one of the male characters, upon witnessing the independent actions of the women at the Convent, wonders what could drive women to such behavior and questions their intellectual capacity: “*What, he wonders, could do this to women? How can their plain brains think up such things?*” (p. 8). This line is rife with misogynistic condescension—“plain brains” implying simplicity or inferiority of female intellect.

TT1 translates this as: *ما الذي يفعله هذا للنساء؟ كيف لأدمغتهن البسيطة أن تفكر في مثل هذه الأمور* (mālladī yaf’ aluhu hādā lil-nisā’? kayfa li-admighatihunna al-basīṭa an tufakkira fī miṭli hādīhi al-umūr?). TT2 gives: *وأخذ يتساءل: ماذا يمكن أن تفعل حقاً هؤلاء النسوة؟ وكيف استطاع دماغهن البسيط جداً تخيل مثل هذه الأشياء* (wa akhadh yatasa’al: mādhā yumkin an taf’ala haqqan hā’ulā’ al-niswah? wa kayfa istaṭā’a dimāghuhunna al-basīṭ jiddan takhayyul miṭla hādīhi al-ashya’?).

For the first rhetorical question, TT1 is very close to the original: “*What could do this to women?*” becomes literally “*What is it that does this to women?*” (ما الذي يفعله هذا للنساء). TT2 slightly reformulates: “*What can really do such a thing to these women?*” (ماذا يمكن أن تفعل حقاً هؤلاء النسوة). TT2 adds *حقاً* (“truly/really”) and specifies *هؤلاء النسوة* (“these women”) rather than just “women” in general. TT1’s phrasing is general (to women), TT2’s is specific (to these women). This is a subtle shift: TT2 might be trying to make the exclamation more immediate (these particular women in question). It might also reflect that the Arabic plural *niswah* (women) often comes with a demonstrative in such constructs. Either way, both convey astonishment at what could affect women to cause such behavior.

The second question carries the sharper insult: “How can their plain brains think up such things?” TT1 renders “plain” as *بسيطة* (*basīṭa*, “simple”) and keeps the plural *أدمغتهن* (*admighatuhunna*, “their brains”). TT2 intensifies the insult with *دماغهن البسيط جداً* (*dimāghuhunna al-basīṭ jiddan*, “their very simple brain”), which both strengthens evaluation and shifts the grammatical framing.

The key divergence is the number. TT1's plural *أدمغتهن* (*admighatuhunna*) aligns with the English plural "brains" and implies that each woman is attributed her own brain, even if disparaged as "simple." TT2, however, uses the singular *دماغ* (*dimāgh*) with a plural possessive, yielding a collective effect ("their brain"), as though the women share one undifferentiated mind. Although Arabic sometimes allows a singular noun after a plural possessive to express a collective sense, the rhetorical outcome still matters: TT2 homogenizes women's intellect into a single entity, whereas TT1's plural construction preserves individual ownership within the insult. In other words, TT2 can slide toward implying a generalized "female brain," while TT1 keeps the reference distributed across separate individuals. The translations also differ in intensity. TT1's *بسيطة* (*basīṭa*) communicates "simple/plain" without reinforcement, but TT2 adds *جدا* (*jiddan*, "very"), making the contempt harsher than the source explicitly states. This intensifier is interpretive, yet it may reflect a judgment that "plain" carries a stronger sting that needs explicit marking in Arabic, or a reading that the speaker's scorn is extreme and should be unmistakable.

Taken together, these choices produce two distinct effects; that is, TT1 effectively communicates "their simple brains," whereas TT2 conveys "their very simple brain," combining singularization with intensification in a way that both sharpens the insult and compresses the women's intellect into a collective, homogenized frame.

The effect on tone and meaning is significant. TT1's translation, while insulting, could still be seen as the man referring to each woman having a simple brain. TT2's version comes off as even more dismissive: lumping the women together as having one "very simple brain" collectively, which arguably is an even more dehumanizing or at least more belittling portrayal. If we think in feminist terms, TT2's choice might inadvertently strengthen the misogyny in the character's voice. It certainly reinforces the stereotype that women are of one mind (and a dull one at that), which is how sexist characters often speak. In a way, TT2 might be making the line sound more like something a sneering chauvinist would say, which is true to the character's attitude. TT1 is closer to the original wording and adequately conveys the belittlement.

Additionally, TT2's use of *هؤلاء النسوة* ("these women") and singular brain might hint at a *collectivist view of women's intellect*, which resonates with certain misogynistic notions in many cultures: e.g., "women all think the same, and not much at that." This could either be Basha capturing the subtext or slightly overshooting it. TT1's plural brains allow for plural subjects each thinking, albeit simply; TT2's singular brain almost imagines them as a hive mind of limited capacity. The novel's context is that the men of Ruby see the Convent women as a collective threat, often not recognizing their individual differences. In that sense, TT2's phrasing might actually align with how those men psychologically reduce the women to a single entity ("those women"). It is an interesting

case where a translation choice that seems grammatically odd might reflect the contemptuous perspective of the speaker in an amplified manner.

Calling someone’s brain “simple” is idiomatic in both languages, but adding “very” might just be Basha’s style for emphasis. It could also be that TT2 wanted to mirror spoken language patterns—for instance, an Arabic speaker might say *مخه بسيط كثير* (“his brain is very simple”) to mean someone is really not bright, whereas just *مخه بسيط* might sound slightly flat. So perhaps to get the full disdain across, TT2 used *jiddan*.

Both translations reproduce the misogynistic stereotyping already embedded in the narrative, but TT2 intensifies it. That intensification does not automatically indicate the translator’s personal bias; it can be read as an effort to preserve the character’s prejudiced voice. Still, a feminist question remains: could the sexism have been framed as sexism without disturbing the realist tone? Devices such as scare quotes or brief interjections might mark distance, but they would likely feel intrusive in a realist novel. In this sense, the translators’ decision not to mitigate is understandable, yet TT2 goes beyond non-mitigation into amplification. If that amplification is deliberate, it can function as a sharper exposure of the man’s contempt; if it is unintended, it exemplifies Berezhna’s (2020) point that unconscious social attitudes can produce gendered shifts that reinforce stereotypes through word choice.

A further ideological shift appears in number marking. TT1’s plural “brains” implies each woman has her own “simple” mind, which remains insulting but still individuates them. TT2’s singular “brain,” however, can suggest women share one collective mind, a more dehumanizing patriarchal trope that treats women as a monolith and downplays individual intellect. This small grammatical shift shows how the number can recalibrate interpretation and the degree of stereotyping. Linked to the wider trope that women’s intellectual and creative abilities are traditionally belittled in many cultures, both TT1 and TT2 inevitably transmit a character’s sexist worldview, but TT2’s stronger wording makes that dismissal more pronounced and more difficult for the reader to miss.

Interestingly, the analysis points out that *both translations contain basīt (simple) and basīt jiddan (very simple), which is exactly the problematic trope identified*. So, either way, the target readers are confronted with a statement that women’s brains are simple. The narrative context (with the author’s perspective and subsequent events) frames this as a flawed, sexist viewpoint to be condemned, but a casual reader might still internalize some of it. A feminist translation strategy might have been to mark this more clearly as the character’s thought (e.g., adding “he thinks to himself, with obvious contempt, ‘how could their brain...’”), but that would be heavy-handed and outside the normal literary style. Neither translator does that; they keep it straightforward.

TT2's intensification can be read in two ways. It may unintentionally reinforce a misogynistic stereotype, since the added harshness is not explicitly framed as condemnable, or it may be a deliberate choice to highlight the ugliness of the character's thinking. If deliberate, it supports a critical discourse reading by making the sexism more visible and easier to critique. The risk is that added intensity can also sound like endorsement unless the surrounding context counters it. In *Paradise*, the context largely does, so the amplification is more likely to sharpen the critique than normalize the view.

One more detail: TT1's construction "كيف لأدمغتهن البسيطة أن تفكر" literally "How can their simple brains think...". TT2's "كيف استطاع دماغهن البسيط جداً تخيّل" is phrased as a past "how was their very simple brain able to imagine...". TT2 turned it into a completed action (how were they able to imagine), whereas TT1 kept an infinitive (to think up). This is a small grammatical shift, possibly for fluency. TT2 using past tense *istata 'a... takhayyul* is not a huge change, but it perhaps adds a nuance of incredulity (how could they have possibly imagined such things). Both effectively question capability, just slightly different aspects.

ST	
"God bless the pure and holy" indeed. That was their purity. That was their holiness. That was the deal Zechariah had made during his humming prayer. It wasn't God's brow to be feared. It was his own, their own. Is that why "Be the Furrow of His Brow" drove them crazy?" (p. 217)	
TT1	TT2
"يبارك الرب في النقي والورع" بالفعل. كان ذلك هو نقائهم. كان ذلك هو ورعهم. كانت تلك هي الصفقة التي أبرمها زكريا خلال صلاته المهممة. لم يكن جبين الرب هو الذي يجب أن يخشى منه. بل جبينه هو، جبينهم. ألهذا كانت عبارة: "كونوا تغضينة جبينه" تدفعهم إلى الجنون؟ (ص. 319)	"فليبارك الله الطاهرين والقديسين". وفعلاً هكذا كانت طهارتهم قداستهم. وهكذا كانت الصفقة التي عقدها زكريا عندما كان يندن بصلاته. لم تكن "غضبة الله" هي التي يجب خشيتها، بل غضبة كل فرد منهم، غضبتهم التي يجب أن يخشوها. لهذا السبب جعلتهم عبارة "كونوا غضبة الله" يصابون بالجنون. (ص. 290-291)

Table 5. Pat's reflection on Ruby's hypocritical purity and self-imposed holiness

At another point, Morrison's text uses the phrase "the pure and holy" in a religious context, likely describing a category of people or an ideal (in *Paradise*, there are references to the "8-rock" families considering themselves pure/holy in some way, or scriptural references). TT1 translates "the pure and holy" as *النقي والورع* (al-naqī wa-al-wara'), whereas TT2 uses *الطاهرين والقديسين* (al-ṭāhirīn wa-al-quddīsīn). Both Arabic phrases mean "the pure and the devout/saintly," but with different shades. Thus, *al-naqī* means "pure" (masculine singular adjective) and *al-wara'* means "pious/devout," often implying God-fearing abstinence, so TT1 foregrounds purity and piety/abstinence; by contrast, *al-ṭāhirīn* means "the pure ones" (plural) and *al-quddīsīn* means "the holy/sanctified ones" (plural, often "saints"), so TT2 carries a stronger ecclesiastical, saintly register.

So TT1's translation introduces *wara'* (*piety/abstinence*), which is not exactly in the original phrase "holy," but is a particular flavor of holiness, often meaning someone who abstains from sins, very devout. TT2 goes for more direct, broad words for purity and saintliness.

The difference might reflect style; that is, TT1's wording *النقي والورع* is somewhat less common as a pairing in everyday Arabic; it reads as a thoughtful rendering, stressing righteousness through purity and austerity. TT2's *الطاهرين والتقيسين* is a more directly religious-sounding collocation, which could even be found in Arabic Bible translations or church talk (saints and the pure). It is plural, implying a group of people who are pure and saintly, whereas TT1 used singular adjectives as if describing a singular concept or pair of qualities (the pure and the devout). Since the context might be describing a group ("the pure and holy [ones]"), TT2's plural is grammatically fitting. TT1 might have considered "the pure and holy" conceptually and given singular adjectives, which in Arabic is a bit ambiguous—are they describing a singular noun or a collective? Possibly TT1 assumed an implicit plural, too, but *النقي والورع* could be read as masculine singular or a generic notion.

In any case, the connotation differs: TT1's *wara'* specifically suggests *God-fearing abstinence*. TT2's *quddīsīn* suggests *canonized holiness or saint-like holiness*. TT1's choice might reflect an interpretation that the phrase refers to moral purity and devoutness in behavior (*wara'* often implies refraining from worldly pleasures, deep religious devotion). TT2 suggests an elevated spiritual status (like saints or holy men). Depending on the nuance of Morrison's text, one may be closer than the other. If Morrison meant simply morally pure and sacred, TT2's words fit straightforwardly. TT1's insertion of *wara'* adds a slight nuance of *ascetic righteousness*.

This indicates how each translator navigated the semantic field of "holy." It also shows the influence of possibly different registers: TT2 might be borrowing language from religious discourse or scripture, where "pure and holy" would be *ṭāhirīn wa quddīsīn*. TT1 might be phrasing it in more Quranic or Islamic terms (*wara'* is an Arabic-Islamic concept of piety).

The analysis notes that TT1's choice introduces a *subtle shift* by stressing righteousness (*wara'*) in addition to purity. It suggests TT1's phrasing "stresses not only purity but also a sense of righteousness," which is true – *wara'* conveys righteous self-restraint. TT2's *ṭāhirīn wa quddīsīn* emphasizes purity and sanctity with perhaps less nuance about the manner of being holy (just states they are holy).

Another difference discussed in Table 5 relates to a subsequent line: the translation of a phrase about "God's brow" and "Be the Furrow of His Brow." The ST had metaphorical language linking the community to being the furrow of God's brow. TT1 translates "God's brow" literally as *جبين الرب* (*jabīn al-rabb*), maintaining that metaphor. TT2, however, translated that concept into *غضبة الله* (*ghaḍbat Allah* – "God's anger/wrath"), which is a significant deviation – changing a physical

metaphor (frown of brow) into an emotional state (God's wrath). TT2 also translates "Be the Frown of His Brow" (which is figurative) as *كونوا غضبة الله* ("Be God's wrath"), whereas TT1 kept it closer with *كونوا تغضبة حبينه* (roughly "Be the wrinkle/frown of His brow").

This indicates TT2 took a different interpretive approach. Perhaps concluding that "frown of His brow" metaphorically means God's anger (since a furrowed brow implies anger), he translated the meaning (God's anger) rather than the literal image. TT1 preserved the literal image, which is more foreign but also more poetic, trusting the reader to interpret or at least sense the metaphor.

The result is that TT2 introduced *a significant alteration in theological imagery*; TT2's audience sees a phrase about God's anger, whereas TT1's audience sees a mysterious phrase about God's forehead. This is a cultural and interpretive manipulation. It might reflect that TT2 wanted to avoid a possibly awkward or unclear metaphor (would Arabic readers get "be the frown of His brow" easily? Probably not directly – it is unusual). Instead, TT2 wrote something clear: "be God's wrath." But that is a stronger, somewhat different message. TT1's fidelity keeps the ambiguity and richness of the original metaphor (with its physical imagery). TT2's choice *underlines divine anger*, thus changing emphasis. The analysis indeed points out that TT2's decision "moves the emphasis from a physical trait to an emotional condition," altering cultural/religious connotations.

Table 5's differences do not directly involve gender; they are more about handling religious idioms. However, indirectly, they reflect each translator's engagement with *cultural framing*. TT2 tends to localize and clarify religious references (like using Allah instead of al-rabb, imperative *falyubārik* for "God bless" vs TT1's indicative *yubāriku*, etc.). TT1 tends to preserve a bit more of the original's nuance (keeping "Lord" as al-rabb, which is a generic term for Lord that could be Judeo-Christian or Islamic, whereas TT2 uses Allah specifically, tying it to the Islamic context). Also, TT1 uses the present tense "yubāriku" (blesses), whereas TT2 uses the imperative "falyubārik" (may God bless), shifting tone to a direct supplication/command. These choices show TT2 possibly aligning the text more with a typical Arabic religious register (invoking Allah's blessing, etc.), whereas TT1's might read as more narrative/descriptive.

The usage of *Allah* by TT2 versus *al-rabb* by TT1 is notable. *Al-rabb* means "the Lord" and is used in Arabic Bibles and some contexts, but *Allah* is the common word for God in Arabic, especially in Islamic usage. TT2's choice to say *Allah* introduces an explicitly Islamic term; TT1's *al-rabb* could be seen as more neutral or Judeo-Christian friendly. Possibly, TT1 kept *al-rabb* to maintain the flavor of a Christian reference (if indeed the content is biblical or a Christian allusion), whereas TT2 defaults to *Allah*, which any Arab reader, Muslim or Christian, understands as God, but it does give a distinctly Islamic tone. This again is a *cultural adaptation* that might not be necessary, but reflects the translator's comfort zone or assumptions. The analysis remarks that the choice between *al-rabb* and *Allah* shows

different stylistic preferences or religious affiliations, noting that *Allah* introduces a specific emphasis on the Islamic concept of God. That implies TT2’s translation leans Islamic in phrasing, which might resonate with a broad Arab audience but slightly shifts the ecumenical tone if the original deliberately does not use “God” plainly.

ST	
The chill intensifies as the men spread deeper into the mansion, taking their time, looking, listening, alert to the female malice that hides here. (p. 4)	
TT1	TT2
والبرودة تزداد مع انتشار الرجال على نحو أعمق في الدارة الكبيرة، متمهلين، ينظرون ويصغون، متنبهين إلى الشر الأثوي الذي يختبئ هنا. (ص. 12)	كان البرد يشتد مع انتشار الرجال في أعماق الدير، كانوا متمهلين في سيرهم، يصغون وينتظرون، متيقظين، بسبب مكر النساء المختبئات هنا في كل مكان. (ص. 14).

**Table 6.** *Men cautiously navigating the Convent's depths, sensing hidden female malice*

As concerns Table 6, at a climactic moment describing the men’s perception of the Convent women, Morrison uses the phrase “female malice” (the men believe they are confronting female malice). This phrase encapsulates the patriarchal fear and demonization of independent women—a theme in *Paradise*, where the men scapegoat the women as evil.

TT1 translates “female malice” as *الشر الأثوي* (al-sharr al-unthawī). *Sharr* means evil or malice, and *unthawī* is an adjective meaning feminine/female. So that is a straightforward rendering: “the feminine evil” or “female evil.” If anything, TT1’s phrasing perhaps even intensifies it by using *al-sharr*, which unequivocally means evil (malice could have shades, but in many contexts malice = evil intent, so it is fine). The structure parallels English exactly. TT2, however, chooses *مكر النساء* (makr al-nisā’). *Makr* means cunning, craftiness, often with a connotation of deceit. *Al-nisā’* means “of women” (women in general). So TT2’s is “the cunning of women” or “women’s cunning.” This is a different word: cunning vs malice/evil.

The word *malice* implies ill intent, maleficence. *Cunning implies cleverness and slyness—can be negative but emphasizes intellect or strategy rather than pure malice.* By translating *evil/malice* as *makr* (cunning), TT2 softens the moral judgment and instead frames it as a kind of *sly intelligence or trickery*. The analysis indeed notes that *makr* carries a connotation of deceit or slyness and that TT2’s phrase appears to “deliberately downplay the intensity of ‘malice,’” possibly to soften perception of female characters. It suggests TT2 might be reframing the patriarchal concept slightly: instead of calling women outright evil, calling them cunning, which, while still negative (in Arabic “makr” often

is negative, historically “makr النساء” is a common phrase meaning women’s wiles or tricks), is less demonizing than “evil.” *Makr* can even have a grudging respect component (“crafty”).

Why would the translator of TT2 do this? The analysis posits that while Morrison critiques the patriarchal fear of female power (by showing how men call it malice), TT2’s translation could be an attempt to reframe these perceptions in line with feminist efforts to reclaim and redefine female characteristics. In other words, TT2 might be seen as giving a subtle feminist twist: portraying the women not as inherently evil but as perhaps *strategic or clever*. It is as if TT2’s language could be interpreted as suggesting “these women have cunning (which patriarchy sees negatively, but cunning also implies capability).” The analysis even says TT2’s translation could be seen as an attempt to align with feminist efforts to reclaim female traits – turning “malice” into something more akin to intelligence (though cunning still has a negative ring).

Whether this was intentional or just a byproduct of choosing a known phrase (since “makr al-nisā’” is a somewhat set phrase referring to women’s guile, even appearing in old tales and proverbs), it certainly changes the flavor. TT1’s “al-sharr al-unthawī” is harsh, demonizing: literally “feminine evil.” TT2’s “makr al-nisā’” is more like a stereotype (“the cunning of women”) that is slightly less loaded in terms of pure evil, highlighting slyness.

This is a key difference because it affects how an Arabic reader perceives the justification for the violence: TT1’s wording might make the men seem like they think the women are outright evil (justifying extreme measures), TT2’s wording might make it seem the men think the women are tricksters and need reining in (slightly less satanic). TT2’s could inadvertently reduce the starkness of the men’s delusion or make it more palatable, depending on how you see “makr.”

Now, TT1’s translation intensifies with “evil,” TT2 softens with “cunning,” which the analysis interprets as TT2’s effort to soften the perception of the female characters, possibly making them more layered or strategic rather than simply villainous. This indeed could align with a translator, perhaps unconsciously not wanting to label women as evil, thus using a term that implies capability (even if it's negative capability).

It is worth noting that “مكر النساء” is a very common phrase in Arabic literature (e.g., present in *One Thousand and One Nights* and folklore), signifying the idea that women are cunning. The analysis references that in Middle Eastern folklore, *kayd* or *makr* (deceit) of women is a recurring concept. So TT2’s word choice taps into that cultural motif, which readers would recognize. It is a double-edged sword: on one hand, it is a less severe accusation than pure evil; on the other, it invokes a stereotype with its own baggage (women as schemers). But the analysis suggests that TT2’s “cunning” *injects an element of strategic presence* and perhaps could be interpreted more positively than sheer malice. It even says TT2’s translation “suggests a more layered, perhaps strategic, portrayal of women” whereas

TT1's leads to seeing them as "traditionally villainous". This is a fascinating interpretation, for TT2's word might allow the reader to see the women as actively smart (even if cunning), hinting at a more empowering spin ironically.

Now, beyond the key phrase, *both* translations appended some extra phrasing in this segment. In other words, TT1 adds *متنبهين* (*mutanabbihīn* – "being alert/vigilant") apparently to modify how the men apply "female malice." Possibly TT1 phrase might have been like "applying female malice, alert to the apparent risk/harm embodied by the feminine characters" – the analysis mentions TT1's addition of *mutanabbihīn*, which indicates a sharp awareness or vigilance. It seems TT1 inserted a word implying the men were *cautious or on guard* about the women's malice, heightening the sense that the men perceive the women as dangerous enough to be very alert. This is not explicitly in the original (Morrison did not likely say "alert to female malice," just "female malice"). So TT1's translator embellishes the scenario: the men are portrayed as *extremely mindful* of this supposed female malice. That could intensify the notion that femininity is connected with peril and negativity in their view. It emphasizes the men's fear.

In TT2, the translator inserts *بسبب* (*bisabab*, meaning because of), which introduces an explicit causal link, suggesting that the armed men act in response to the women's cunning. By making cause and effect overt, TT2 can recast the attack as a reaction to female behavior, thereby rationalizing, and potentially partly justifying, the men's violence. In the source, this causal logic belongs to the men's discourse as part of their demonization of women, rather than an authorial claim that the attack occurs because of female malice. The added causal marker, therefore, risks lending structural legitimacy to a patriarchal rationale and edging toward a victim-blaming frame in which the women's alleged cunning becomes the impetus for harm. It is possible to argue that TT2 simply verbalizes what the men themselves imply, namely that they are responding to a perceived threat, but without distancing devices, this clarification may sound like endorsement.

In Table 6, TT1's additions portray the men as hyper-vigilant against female evil (which underscores how demonized the women are), while TT2's addition portrays the men as acting because of women's behavior (which might tilt toward rationalizing the men's stance). TT1's approach might make the men look paranoid (they are super alert to this "evil"), and TT2's might make them look forced to react (the women's cunning compelled it).

TT1's approach shows the constructed nature of the threat (they are on high alert for what they perceive as evil), highlighting the men's extreme bias. TT2's approach could be read as more sympathetic to the men (they responded due to cunning, implying cause). This is a critical difference in how the narrative could be received. The analysis notes TT2's *bisabab* "implies men's actions are

influenced by women’s behavior,” which is close to justifying it, a narrative shift toward patriarchal reasoning (blaming women for men’s violence, classic trope).

ST	
It was women who walked this road. Only women. Never men. For more than twenty years Lone had watched them. Back and forth, back and forth: crying women, staring women, scowling, lip-biting women or women just plain lost [...] out here where the wind handled you like a man, women dragged their sorrow up and down the road between Ruby and the Convent. (p. 270)	
TT1	TT2
حيث أن النساء هن اللواتي يمشين في هذا الطريق. النساء فحسب. لا رجال أبداً. منذ أكثر من عشرين عاماً راقبتهن لون. ذهاباً وإياباً: نساء باكيات، نساء محدقات، نساء عابسات يعرضن على شفاهن أو نساء ضائعات فحسب [...] هنا حيث تعاملك الريح كرجل، كانت النساء يجرن أحزانهن على امتداد الطريق جينةً وذهاباً بين روبي و"الدير". (ص. 392)	لأنّ النساء هنّ اللواتي يمشين على ذلك الطريق. نساء فقط، وليس رجالاً أبداً. وقد رأتهم لون طيلة أكثر من عشرين سنة: في الذهاب والإياب، في الذهاب والإياب: نساء باكيات، نساء محدقات، نساء مقطبات أو عضّات على شفاهنّ، نساء تانهات وحسب [...] هنا، حيث تعاملك الريح كرجل، نسوة يجرجرن ندمهن على هذا الطريق بين روبي والدير. (ص. 354)

Table 7. Lone's observation of women's sorrowful journeys between Ruby and the Convent

Table 7 corresponds to a passage that conveys an ironic or poignant commentary on a gender-exclusive experience, likely from later in the novel (perhaps reflecting that only women perform certain supportive acts and “never men,” etc.). The ST uses repeated references to “women” and explicitly contrasts with “never men,” emphasizing a gender divide. It also contains the metaphor “the wind handled you like a man,” linking harsh natural forces to masculinity and thereby highlighting the women's endurance.

TT1 translates “only women” as *النساء فحسب* (al-nisā’ faḥasb) – literally “women only”, and “never men” as *لا رجال أبداً* (lā rijāl abadan) – literally “no men ever”. TT2 similarly has *نساء فقط* (nisā’ faqat – “women only”) and *وليس رجالاً أبداً* (wa-laysa rijālan abadan – “and never men”). Both did fine with that (TT2 uses a slightly different construction but the same meaning). Both, thus, maintain the exclusivity of women's experiences and the emphatic exclusion of men, preserving Morrison’s deliberate repetition.

For the metaphor “the wind handled you like a man,” TT1 gives *تعاملك الريح كرجل* (tu‘āmiluka al-rīḥ ka-rajul), a direct literal translation (the wind treats you like a man). TT2 similarly has *تعاملك* or, with a slight variation in form, the metaphor is effectively preserved (the analysis says TT2 retains that metaphor too). Thus, both kept the powerful metaphor linking environmental hardship to masculinity.

The key difference noted is that TT1 omits some of the repetition in the ST that conveyed the relentless, continuous struggle of women. The ST apparently had a repetitive structure to emphasize

the ongoing nature of women's movement or suffering ("women ... women ... never men ... never men," etc.). The analysis states TT1 omits this repetition, perhaps to avoid redundancy or to fit Arabic stylistic preferences, whereas TT2 retains phrases more fully (though TT2 might have done subtle shifts like using synonyms *muqattibāt* for frowning vs TT1's straightforward *aḥzānahunna* vs TT2's *nadamahunna* for regret, etc.). TT1's omission "lessens the sense of relentless struggle," thereby reducing the intensity of that passage's emotional and physical toil conveyed to Arab readers. TT2, by keeping more of the repetition or at least providing synonyms for variation, preserves the continuous, exhausting movement conveyed in the original (the ST likely repeated "they walked and walked ... only women, never men, ..." or such).

TT1 may streamline the passage for flow, but this comes at a cost, because it reduces some of the rhetorical force that underscores the exclusivity and continuity of women's experiences. TT2, although it may rephrase certain emotions, still conveys a multiplicity of affective states by differentiating items that TT1 tends to level, for example, by using *nadamahunna* for regret and *muqattibāt* for frowning, where TT1 may rely more generally on *aḥzānahunna* for sorrow. These choices slightly recalibrate the emotional register, such as sorrow versus remorse, but TT2 still covers a range broadly comparable to the source. The analysis notes that TT2's subtle shifts modulate emotional tone while delivering an overall similar message. Both translations preserve the wind metaphor, which is significant because it links adversity to masculine-coded strength while foregrounding women's resilience against male hardship. The analysis further notes that, although the translations remain generally accurate and faithful, Morrison's dense prose and metaphorical texture are somewhat simplified, which results in a partial loss of nuance.

In terms of gender theme, both translations successfully convey the idea that women bear burdens exclusively and that men are absent from those struggles. TT1's slight omissions just make the struggle seem a bit less relentless. This might slightly reduce the impact of the feminist point, as repetition in literature often serves rhetorical emphasis (Wright, 1965). So TT1 inadvertently made the narrative less insistent on the continuous nature of women's labor or suffering by trimming repetition, potentially softening the feminist critique that it is *always* women, *never* men, over and over. TT2 apparently balanced fidelity with some stylistic modulation but kept the effect largely intact.

## Conclusion

This article set out to show how gendered ideology and target-culture expectations shape word manipulation in two Arabic translations of Morrison's *Paradise* by Tawfiq Al-Asadi (TT1) and Ali Basha (TT2). Using a comparative textual analysis guided by feminist translation studies and CDA (Fairclough, 2013; Lazar, 2005; Simon, 1996; von Flotow, 1997), the results confirm that translation

is not a neutral transfer of meaning but a socially situated act of rewriting in which lexical and stylistic choices can recalibrate voice, evaluation, and power relations (Lefevere, 2016; Venuti, 2011; Bian & Li, 2022). Across the selected passages, both translators reproduce Morrison's gendered tensions, yet they do so through distinct manipulation profiles that lead to different interpretive routes for Arabic readers.

Generally speaking, TT1 tends toward omission and simplification, which frequently reduces narrative density and intertextual resonance. The most salient instance is the removal of the Latin Marian references, a choice that narrows the religious-cultural layering and, by extension, attenuates a feminine symbolic register embedded in the ST (Alekseeva, 2001; Allaithy, 2020). TT1 also shows a preference for literal retention of certain metaphors and labels, which preserves the harsh demonizing frame and foregrounds the men's patriarchal fear without interpretive mediation. While this pattern may align with a domesticating impulse to reduce explanatory burden or avoid culturally *distant* material, it also demonstrates how excision itself becomes ideological, because what is removed can be as meaningful as what is translated (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014; Lefevere, 2016). And as concerns TT2, it is more interventionist and more explicitly evaluative, often adding honorifics, intensifiers, and culturally familiar framings that reshape stance and character portrayal. This shows how seemingly small lexical decisions can naturalize patriarchal courtesy norms, homogenize women's subjectivity, or expand male *protective* ownership into a broader gendered claim (Berezhna, 2020; Venuti, 2011). TT2 also repeatedly re-semantizes imagery in culturally legible ways. Even when such choices appear to soften moral condemnation, they can also reactivate entrenched stereotypes and subtly reconfigure causal logic through explanatory additions, which risks aligning the narrative with justificatory, victim-blaming structures rather than exposing them as patriarchal projections (Kramina, 2004; Klimovich, 2015).

Taken together, word manipulation can reshape characterization and the moral positioning of gendered subjects through patterned operations; that is, omission and thinning of intertextual depth, versus evaluative enrichment, intensification, and culturally resonant substitutions. These patterns demonstrate that translators operate as intercultural mediators who adapt not only wording but also the interpretive environment in which characters are read (Liddicoat, 2016). In a sensitive text like *Paradise*, such mediation has heightened consequences: shifts in number marking, labels for women, and metaphors of female threat do not merely adjust style; they recalibrate how female agency, individuality, and perceived danger are constructed in the target discourse (von Flotow, 1997; Simon, 1996). The more significant implication is that translation criticism, particularly for gender-sensitive literature, must remain detail-oriented in its attention to micro-level lexical moves, as these accumulate into macro-level ideological effects (Bian & Li, 2022).

We acknowledge that this study is necessarily limited by its passage-based scope and the absence of direct access to translators' stated intentions, which means motivational claims remain inferential and grounded in textual evidence. Future research could add reception-oriented methods to test how Arabic readers actually interpret these shifts. Comparative work that includes female translators, different Arabic editions, or translations into other languages would also help clarify which patterns are strongly gender-linked and which reflect broader norms of domestication, religious register, and ideological accommodation (Larson, 1997; Secovnie, 2012). Ultimately, the results demonstrate that in translating female-authored literature, word manipulation is not incidental style; it is a mechanism through which cultural authority, gender ideology, and literary meaning are transmitted, transformed, and sometimes fractured across languages.

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