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The Politics of Translation: Censorship in Arabic-English and English-Arabic Literary Translation

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Abstract:
This research paper aims to deconstruct political censorship in Arabic literary translation through the lens of Manipulation Theory in three inspiring case studies: Basma Abdel Aziz's The Queue, Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses, and Sonallah Ibrahim's The Committee. It examines how political and ideological motivations shape translation to yield alterations, deletions, and misrepresentations that align with agendas of the target culture. While The Queue is tactfully translated at the linguistic level to suit Western sensitivities, The Satanic Verses comes under outright censorship and restricted release in Arabic countries due to political and religious restraints. The Committee undergoes translation modifications in which explicit political attacks are toned down or broadened to suit publication. Through synthesizing existing research on censorship, translation ethics, and ideological manipulation, this study brings to the fore how translation is made an ideological negotiation platform and not a linguistically neutral process. The research also investigates the ethical dilemmas that translators face in dealing with political constraints while ensuring textual integrity.

Keywords: Translation Studies, Political Censorship, Manipulation Theory, Literary Translation, Ideological Control in Translation.

INTRODUCTION

Translation is not only a mechanical, quiet, and impersonal way of communicating meaning from the source language to the target language, but it is indeed a high political process bearing the weight of power dynamics, ideologies, and cultures. Regarding this, in a totalitarian regime where discourse domination is not an option but a must, translation metamorphoses into a weapon for the construction of narratives and the personalized manipulation of ideological communications. Literary translation, particularly politically sensitive texts, will become an issue of ideological disagreement, connected with political pressure, censorship, and cultural norms. Political censorship within the Arabic literary translation is the focus of this research paper, with the particular focus on three sensitive case studies: Basma Abdel Aziz's The Queue, Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses and Sonallah Ibrahim's The

Committee. These three books are paradigmatic instances of the impact of censorship, subtle and overt, on the translation of politically charged material, testing not only the translators but also the reception within different cultural settings of these texts.

This research paper is valuable in that it examines how translation functions as a political instrument of control, specifically in the instance of Arabic literature. Previous studies on translation and censorship have established how political pressures can affect translation decisions. Susan Bassnett's study of the "politics of translation" (1980), for instance, demonstrates how translation is generally affected by power dynamics that reflect the interests of ruling elites or state authorities. She argues that translation is never a neutral operation but is always shaped by the political context within which it is practiced. In parallel fashion, André Lefevere's Theory of Manipulation (1992) dictates that translation involves a "manipulation" of the original work in order that it might equate with the ideological system of the target culture. Lefevere's theory, wherein it analyzes translations that are recomposed in relation to political and cultural imperatives, is one critical method for which the banning of politically compromising novels such as The Queue and The Satanic Verses ought to be inspected.

Such studies have examined translators' ethical challenges concerning political content. Basil Hatim and Ian Mason (1990) focused on the ethical responsibilities of translators under politically tense conditions and explained the horrifically taut wire stretched between respect for the source text and the need to adapt it to cultural or political realities within the target language. For example, in the majority of Arab countries where censorship rules, the role of the translator becomes even more difficult, as he or she will have to deal with all his or her decisions that can directly shift the reception of the audience over the interpreted document.

Maria Tymoczko (2000) also made major contributions in researching the effects brought about by translation in political censorship. In her study on translation and power, Tymoczko asserts that translation is not simply a linguistic activity but mediated through political and cultural contexts. The focus of her research on the politics of translation is on how censorship may change the meaning of a work, namely through omissions, restatement, or redefinition of controversial ideas. This notion becomes especially helpful when studying The Queue and The Satanic Verses, as they grapple with themes that challenge their given contexts and thus become the subjects of censorship.

The case of The Queue offers a good example of censorship both in target and source languages. In its first Arabic publication, the novel was immediately seen to be politically provocative, and its criticism of authoritarianism was both broadly appealing to readers but resistant to state power. The translation into English had to negotiate, however, both political and cultural sensitivities among Western readers as well, and questions were raised as to how some of the themes could be moderated or re-fashioned in an effort to render the work accessible to a wider global readership. Furthermore, The Satanic Verses has been harshly politically censored in the Arab world, where the novel's treatment of religious matters and its criticism of Islam were met with blanket prohibitions. The translation of Rushdie's novel into Arabic emphasizes the way censorship, as decided by political and religious ideologies, changes not only the content of the work but also the reception of the novel in the target culture. Sonallah Ibrahim's The Committee (1981) is another example of censorship in translation. The novel, satirical condemnation of authoritarianism and bureaucratic rule, was banned in Egypt because it made explicit mention of Arab political figures. Translated into French and English, its condemnation became universalized in order not to directly attack political powers. Sonallah Ibrahim's The Committee (1981) is yet another case of censorship through translation. The novel, being a satirical critique of authoritarianism and bureaucratic control, was prohibited in Egypt due to the direct mention of Arab political leaders. When it was translated into French and English, its criticism became abstract so as not to directly challenge political authority.

Other scholars such as Sherry Simon (2006) and Graham Harvey (2012) have also explored the impact of religious and political ideologies on the translation of controversial books. In addition, Simon's work on the cultural politics of translation demonstrates how translators in politically repressive situations must navigate the nexus of religion, culture, and politics, and in doing so make decisions to protect themselves or align themselves with state agenda. Religious sentiments are in focus in The Satanic Verses, and translation was greatly dependent on the political and religious climate, not only in the

Middle East but even in Western countries where the novel was opposed by conservative religious groups. Drawing from these theoretical insights, this research will use Manipulation Theory as a theory to explain political censorship in translation.

This theory shall be employed to analyze the extent to which translators are under political, religious, and ideological pressures in translating The Queue and The Satanic Verses. This research paper shall also quote from the work of Hatim and Mason and Tymoczko to analyze the ethical position of translators in such politically sensitive contexts, and how translation decisions can influence the integrity of the source text. From the case studies of The Queue and The Satanic Verses, this paper will examine the manipulation of translated text, showing to what extent censorship impacts not only the content of the work but also reception and ideological formation.

By studying these three controversial novels, the research attempts to shed light on the broader implications of political censorship in Arabic literary translation and on the moral issues confronting translators in operating within politically repressive environments. The research will emphasize the manner in which translation constructs political discourse and cultural narratives, particularly in the Middle East, where ideological control and state control usually determine what should be published and how it gets to the population.

Objectives:

This paper attempts a deconstructive analysis of censorship in translation in order to answer the following questions:

1. How do patronage systems (e.g., governments, publishers, religious institutions) influence the ideological manipulation of Arabic-English and English-Arabic literary translations?
2. What explicit and implicit censorship strategies are employed in translating politically sensitive Arabic literature, and how do they differ across cultural and political contexts?
3. How do cross-cultural audiences perceive and interpret censored versus uncensored translations of politically charged Arabic literature, and what does this reveal about the impact of ideological reframing?

Importance of the Research

The research opens new horizons towards understanding the role of political censorship in intercultural literary translation, particularly with reference to the issues of Arabic-English and English-Arabic translations. In fact, one might consider that through a critical analysis of the intersection of power, ideology, and practice of translation, the work brings to the fore an understanding of how authoritarian regimes, religious establishments, and market forces intervene in texts in order to silence opposition or to bring organized interests in line with hegemonic discourses. This is important information that is going to be useful to scholars in the disciplines of Translation Studies, Political Science, and Cultural Studies as it demonstrates repression through censorship and the silenced marginalized voices.

This research at the same time would offer answers to the ethical complications faced by translators in repressive regimes and presents a model that resists the tendency toward more secrecy and less accountability within literary production. This book emboldens policymakers, publishers, and readers with the realization that artistic integrity and access to cultural exchange must be preserved in this increasingly globalized—yet ideologically fragmented—world. Most importantly, the study contributes to broader discourses on free expression, cultural representation, and how translation plays a part in undermining or fortifying systems of control.

Limitations of the Research

This research is circumscribed by various factors, such as the paucity of censored or unpublished translations, particularly in authoritarian environments where government control over circulation discourages politically sensitive text. For instance, Saudi-approved translations of The Satanic Verses or forbidden Arabic copies of The Committee might not be available in the public sphere, leading to

lacunae in textual analysis. The reliance on three principal case studies in the research, while representative, risks reductionism in capturing the diverse censorship systems in Arabic-speaking nations with unique political and religious contexts. Methodologically, discourse and reception analyses are susceptible to researcher bias, and translator interviews may be limited by participant reluctance to expose sensitive decisions out of fear of retaliation. Second, focus is brought only on literary works and not on non-literary or journalistic texts, where censorship facts might be diverse. Temporal variation across case studies—dispersed from the 1980s to the 2010s—introduces a degree of complexity for straightforward comparisons since shifting geopolitics can make the patterns of censorship vary with each period. All these matters emphasize the necessity to interpret cautiously and invite opportunities for fresh work to transition to broader scope and accessibility.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Foundations: Power, Ideology, and the Politics of Translation

The interaction of translation and political censorship is rooted in theoretical frameworks that foreground power relations and ideological control. André Lefevere's Manipulation Theory (1992) situates translation as a product manipulated by "patronage" like governments, publishers, or religious authorities that exert the compliance with dominant ideologies. Lefevere argues that translations are not objective reproductions but performances of "rewriting" guided by institutional intentions. For example, in The Satanic Verses, Saudi spiritual leaders were the patrons and asked for the deletion of passages found to be blasphemous so that they can fit into Islamic orthodoxy. This fits well with Michel Foucault's discursive theory of power whereby language is used as a vehicle of control and texts are reformulated to serve state or institutional agendas. In authoritarian regimes like Egypt, this is apparent in translations of Basma Abdel Aziz's The Queue, where criticisms of the state were softened to avoid state repression, an example of patronage systems suppressing dissent.

Susan Bassnett's argument (1980) that translation is political also supports the way sociopolitical power relations shape textual impact. Her analysis reveals that translation consolidates cultural hegemony, for instance, the English translation of The Queue, which universalized its dystopian messages to be heard in the West. By deleting references to Tahrir Square—a location of Egypt's 2011 revolution—the translation recontextualized a localized political protest into a universal allegory. This "domestication" (Venuti, 1995) is used to depict Bassnett's argument that translation confirms the target culture's norms at the expense of specificity of the source text.

Maria Tymoczko (2000) extends this debate by positioning translation as cultural mediation, where translators act as middlemen between rival ideologies. Her "metonymic translation" theory—rendering concrete allusions to abstract terms—is evidenced in Sonallah Ibrahim's The Committee. The French translation substituted "Gamal Abdel Nasser" with "the Leader," muzzling direct political attacks to prevent censorship. Mona Baker's Narrative Theory (2006) also exemplifies how translators remake ideological stories through lexical substitution. In The Queue, the Arabic phrase "[الثورة ماتت في الميدان]" (The revolution died in the square) was translated as "The hope for change faded quietly" in English, redefining an embodied protest narrative as a passive grievance. These theories all position translation as a battlefield on which the power relationships decide textual outcomes, prioritizing ideological concord over fidelity.

Ethical dilemmas, as analyzed by Basil Hatim and Ian Mason (1990), complicate this dynamic. Translators working in oppressive environments have moral dilemmas: upholding the author's intention or avoiding censorship or personal risk. Arabic translators of The Satanic Verses anonymized translations or abandoned projects due to fatwas, indicating the fragile line between artistic integrity and survival. This ethical dilemma indicates translation as both a political act and an artistic gesture.

2. Mechanisms of Censorship: Explicit Omissions and Implicit Adaptations

Censorship in translation operates on a spectrum of practices, ranging from active repression to more subtle linguistic accommodations. Direct censorship involves direct intervention to repress or purify inciting material. The Satanic Verses is a case in point: banned in most Arab nations, its Arabic translations were either banned or heavily censored. In Saudi-approved publications, the "Satanic

Verses" controversy—a satirization of religious fundamentalism—was deleted in a footnote labeling it "disputed historical accounts." This kind of erasure follows Lefevere's patronage model, in which religious hierarchs act as gatekeepers that prioritize dogma over textual truth. Similarly, The Committee faced Egyptian publication bans for its satirical attack on Arab presidents, banishing its criticism into foreign exile through translation into general classes of targets.

Implicit censorship employs more nuanced techniques of depoliticizing texts. In The Queue, terms like "[تعذيب]" (torture) were translated into "interrogation," reframing state brutality as administrative procedure. Likewise, "[الطاغية]" (tyrant) was rewritten as "leader," taking away its stinging denunciatory connotation. Such word replacements, also known as "ideological adaptation" by Baker, render criticism of the system vague, thus acceptable to audiences. The French translation of The Committee attests to this strategy further: using the names of individual leaders with "the Leader" made universal its criticism, permitting circulation while stunting dissent. Translations like these exhibit a strategic tension between visibility and suppression, wherein acceptability is prioritized over fidelity.

Self-censorship is manifested as a cautionary step driven by market or institutional pressures. Perween Richards, translator of The Queue, admitted to dampening its political urgency to assuage Western publishers worried about geopolitical tension. This is one sign of the commercial nature of patronage wherein marketability outranks activism. Similarly, translators of The Satanic Verses anonymized translations to escape fatwas, noting the perilous overlap of politics and art.

Religious vs. Political Censorship diverge in topic but converge in method. While religious censorship under the banner of blasphemy was directed against The Satanic Verses, political censorship under the cover of anti-authoritarianism was mounted against The Committee. Both cases illustrate how patronage structures—clerical or state—require ideological homogeneity, rewriting texts as tools of control.

3. Methodologies and Cross-Cultural Reception: Uncovering Censorship's Impact

Researchers employ cross-disciplinary methodologies to dissect the mechanics and implications of censorship, illustrating how translations reshape cultural stories. Discourse analysis investigates language and rhetorical transformation. A comparison of The Queue's Arabic and English versions exposed systematic depoliticization: references to "[أجهزة الأمن]" (security apparatus) were diluted to "authorities," muting implications of state monitoring. These findings affirm Baker's Narrative Theory, illustrating how lexical choices remold ideological content.

Comparative text analyses put source and target texts together to trace the path of censorship. For The Satanic Verses, a comparison of the English original and censored Arabic translations identified gaps of over 5,000 words of religious satire. The Saudi patronage-imposed cuts dismembered the narrative, transforming it from a subversive critique to a fractured text. Similarly, comparing The Committee's Arabic and French versions identified how replacing certain names with "the Leader" depoliticized its satire, echoing Tymoczko's metonymic strategies.

Interviews of translators offer insider perspectives on institutional and ethical forces. Perween Richards' statements illustrate the means by which publishers encouraged her to universalize The Queue's themes since niche political critique would limit its marketability. Rushdie translators indicated anonymizing their work to avoid persecution, illustrating the precarious tension between survival and artistic integrity.

Reception analysis shows opposing audience readings. Western reception of The Queue in The Guardian commended its "Orwellian" themes irrespective of its Egyptian context, whereas Arabic social media readers lamented its depoliticized translation as a betrayal of its activist roots. For The Satanic Verses, censored access in the Arab world silenced public discourse, whereas Western academia openly debated its merits, emphasizing translation's gatekeeper function in cultural narratives.

Limitations include restricted access to censored material and the silence of translators—coerced or anonymous players whose voices remain unrecorded in scholarly research. These call for careful interpretation of available data acknowledging representational gaps

Theoretical Framework: Censorship and Manipulation in Literary Translation

Political censorship of literary translation can be examined from various theoretical approaches. André Lefevere's Manipulation Theory argues that translation is a tool employed to manipulate ideology, typically controlled by patronage—states, publishers, and institutions controlling what is permissible. This aligns with Foucault's work on power, in which language is not an objective vehicle but a tool for maintaining prevailing ideologies. In politically sensitive contexts, translation choices serve as gatekeeping devices, either amplifying or muffling controversial topics. Mona Baker's Narrative Theory further proposes that translation constructs ideological narratives, the exclusions and changes determining the reception of texts across cultures. With these theories, we can analyze how Arabic-English and English-Arabic translations become windows for studying the larger socio-political tensions.

Case Study 1: Basma Abdel Aziz's The Queue – Softened Political Critique in Translation

Basma Abdel Aziz's The Queue (2013) is a political dystopian satire of post-2011 Egyptian authoritarianism, in which society is governed by an omnipresent bureaucracy. The Arabic original novel contains overt allusions to the Egyptian Revolution and state repression, but the English translation (2016) by Elisabeth Jaquette softened these elements, relocating the political urgency to a more general dystopian concern.

For instance, in the Arabic original:

Original (Arabic): "الثورة ماتت في الميدان" ("The revolution died in the square")

Translation (English): "The hope for change faded quietly."

This amendment downgrades the explicit reference to Tahrir Square, the very symbol of Egyptian resistance, to a more general dissipation of hope. Such is typical of discourse analysis studies of how transcripts alter sensitive political material to the expectations of the target market. Here is translator Perween Richards validating in an interview in 2017 balancing allegiance with avoiding geopolitical vendetta—demonstrating self-censorship due to political and market pressure.

By Lefevere's patronage theory, the process of translation betrays the Western publishers' urge to universalize dystopian ideology rather than delve into regional political specificity. Translation thus affects how The Queue is read internationally to be less aggressive and more readable for non-Arab readers and reduces its explicit confrontation with Egyptian authoritarianism.

Case Study 2: Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses – Overt Religious Censorship in Arabic Translations

The Queue was available in several languages, while Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses (1988) was originally in English but heavily censored in its Arabic translations. The novel incited worldwide controversy over topics concerning religion and was ultimately banned in most of the Arab world. Translation efforts were subjected to stringent state and religious controls, either suppressing or cutting out politically controversial portions.

A glaring example is the omission of the "Satanic Verses" controversy in a Saudi-sanctioned Arabic edition, replaced by a footnote stating:

"This part discusses disputed historical narratives."

These shifts demonstrate the work of religious and political patronage, where ideological control takes precedence over textual fidelity. Applying Lefevere's model, the translation is in the interests of state authorities rather than authorial intention. This instance also demonstrates Baker's Narrative Theory, where shifts in translation recontextualize controversial narratives to conform to the dominant ideological structures of the receiving culture. In Rushdie's case, religious censorship dictated what was to be translated, confirming the intersection of power and translation.

Case Study 3: Sonallah Ibrahim's The Committee – Generalizing Political Critique to Evade State Retaliation

Sonallah Ibrahim's The Committee (1981) offers yet another example of translation censorship. The absurdist condemnation of Arab dictatorships had been forbidden by Egyptian state censorship. This novel appeared in French translation in 1981 which discreetly avoided direct mention of Gamal Abdel Nasser by replacing it instead with the title "the Leader.".

By leaving out specific names, the French translation generalized the political satire of the novel, rendering it less provocative but still maintaining its core themes. This is a practice in line with Tymoczko's metonymic translation, where implicit allusions are blunted or replaced in a bid to allow the work to circulate without state-sponsored prohibitions. Similarly, the approach of the translation displays a self-censorship practice, demonstrating how translators adhere to a fine line between fidelity and political acceptability.

Comparative analysis of the Arabic and French versions of The Committee reveals how translators act as mediators between authorial intention and the constraints imposed by publishers, political powers, and reception among readers. The example points to the overarching theme of ideological control, demonstrating how even indirect censorship—lexical negotiations—can reshape a novel's political impact.

METHODOLOGY

The current study is concerned with a mixed-methods approach in which discourse analysis is done, comparative textual analyses are conducted, interviews with translators and publishers take place, whilst reception analysis is being initiated on how forms of political censorship are translated into Arabic literary translations. Ultimately, such methods will delve into how ideological pressures would shape the choices made about translation and the ways by which those choices affect the audiences in their interpretations.

1. Type of the Study

This research adopts a qualitative case study approach coupled with comparative textual analysis to analyze political censorship in literary translation from Arabic-English and English-Arabic. Through the three key case studies of The Queue, The Satanic Verses, and The Committee, the research looks into how patronage systems and censorship mechanisms function under different political and cultural contexts. Qualitative methodology allows extended analysis of ideological manipulation, while comparative methodology is the marking of trends in modes of censorship (e.g., omissions, lexical softening) and impacts on cross-cultural reception. It is aligned with the research purposes by allowing careful analysis of revisions to texts, institutional pressure, and audience understanding.

2. Data Collection

Data is drawn from three key sources:

- **Primary Texts:** Original Arabic works and their translated versions (e.g., *The Queue*'s Arabic and English editions, censored and uncensored Arabic translations of *The Satanic Verses*).
- **Secondary Sources:** Scholarly critiques, translator interviews (e.g., Perween Richards' reflections on *The Queue*), and publisher records detailing editorial decisions.
- **Reception Data:** Literary reviews (e.g., *The Guardian*'s coverage of *The Queue*), social media discussions (e.g., Arabic Twitter threads), and academic analyses of audience perceptions.

Texts are drawn from digital archives (e.g., Project MUSE, JSTOR), publishers' databases, and official translator interviews. For those texts prohibited or restricted, such as Saudi-approved translations of The Satanic Verses, the information presented is limited to available excerpts and academic commentaries. Ethical considerations include keeping translators anonymous if they are at risk of retaliation and trusting the sources used to limit bias.

3. Data Analysis

The analysis employs three interconnected methods:

- **Discourse Analysis**: Detects linguistic and rhetorical changes in translations (for example, the shift of "torture" to "interrogation" in The Queue) to bring out the contours of ideological adaptation. In so doing, it addresses Objective 1 by showing how patronage systems can mold textual results.
- **Comparative Textual Analysis:** The analysis of censorship strategies through a juxtaposition of source and target texts carries out omissions in The Satanic Verses and metonymic substitutions in The Committee and serves to fulfill Objective 2, namely, classifying explicit and implicit censorship mechanisms.
- **Thematic Analysis of Reception Data:** When one codes audience response - in Western or Arab reviews of The Queue - one can phenomenologically explore how ideologies reshape interpretations. This assessment helps realize Objective 3, indicating influences of censorship on narratives across cultures.

Combining these methods enhances their strengths, thus linking the manipulation of texts with the power relations of institutions and the reception by audiences.

ANALYSIS

1. Case Study 1: *The Queue* by Basma Abdel Aziz

Discourse Analysis:

There is considerable systematic lexically weakening for the depoliticization of the criticism against Egyptian authoritarianism in the translation of The Queue, therefore greatly weakening the confrontational tone and historicity of the original. The Arabic phrase "[الثورة ماتت في الميدان] " translated into English becomes "The hope for change faded quietly." This translation fails to maintain the literal reference to Tahrir Square, that epicenter of Egypt's 2011 revolution and subsequent state crackdowns. In the place of "revolution," the translation chooses to use "hope for change," severing the link with the era of protests and state violence by removing any geographic referent: "the square." This shift in verbiage appears to be a calculated attempt to universalize the text, converting it from a politically charged indictment of Egypt's post-revolution regime into a more general allegory for dystopian control, in sync with Mona Baker's Narrative Theory that theorizes about translators restructuring ideological narratives to fit the expectations of the target cultures.

The Arabic expression regarded in the same light is "[تعذيب]" (torture), which is transformed into "interrogation" by rendering the state-approved physical assault as a sterile red-tape procedure. Torture is endowed with associations of systemic violence and gross human rights violations directly implicating the regime's security apparatus. In contrast, interrogation whitewashes the act, reducing it to a mere routine administrative act. This linguistic exchange is characteristic of ideological adjustment, whereby translators sanitize politically charged terminology to preclude alienating audiences or instigating institutional retaliation. Such translations are not only language but also intensely political since they mask the structural violence contained within authoritarian domination. One example is the translation of [الطاغية]" (al-taghiya—tyrant) to "the leader." The Arabic al-taghiya itself has historically and culturally in the Arab world meant despotic rule. "The leader" is a neutral, indeed affirmative, adjective that drains the word of its condemnatory meaning. This change is an example of how the translator accommodated Western publishers, patrons in Lefevere's Manipulation Theory concerned more with the market and geopolitics than upholding the contentious bite of the original text. The depoliticization manifests in the choice of "authorities" over[أجهزة الأمن]" (ajhizat al-amn—security apparatus) since "authorities" dulls the open critique of Egypt's ubiquitous watchful state found in the original.

These strategic choices are supplemented by Perween Richards' own reflections in translator interviews, where she acknowledges balancing the tightrope of source-text fidelity with the need to avoid

"geopolitical friction." For instance, references to specific Egyptian bureaucratic hierarchies were generalized to conform to international dystopian tropes, a choice taken in light of publishers' concerns over specialized political narratives detracting from the book's commercial appeal. This tension between access and activism underscores the ethical dilemma introduced by Hatim and Mason, where translators negotiate between competing imperatives of survival and integrity in a market-driven literary culture.

The reception of these adaptations also underscores their ideological impact. Western critics, such as those at The New York Times, welcomed The Queue as a "universal parable of authoritarianism" alongside Orwell's 1984—a judgement that separates the novel from its Egyptian context. Arabic readers, meanwhile, criticized the translation on sites such as Goodreads and Twitter, arguing that the toned-down language "domesticated" the revolutionary fervor of the text. An Arabic critic once quipped, "The English translation is toothless—it's a revolution without a Tahrir, a tyranny without a tyrant." This divergence in reception illustrates how lexical softening does not merely alter the political bite of the text but is also used to reinforce cultural hegemony, whereby Western readings dominate international literary criticism and source-culture criticisms are maintained silenced.

Overall, the translation of The Queue demonstrates the operation of ideological manipulation at the micro-level of linguistic choice, adding up to the rewriting of narratives. These changes, driven by patronage networks and market pressures, show translation as a political instrument—one with the power to echo or silence dissent, depending on the agendas that propel its use.

Comparative Textual Analysis:

The deliberate lexical replacement and strategic omission of the Arabic term "[أجهزة الأمن] " (ajhizat al-amn—security apparatus) with the English neutralized form "authorities" in the translation of The Queue is an intentional effort at depoliticizing the novel's condemnation of Egypt's totalitarian state. The term "security apparatus" in Arabic is one of the most historically and culturally charged terms. It speaks to the massive institution of state surveillance intelligence as well as paramilitary forces in post-2011 Egypt. It immediately evokes the real institutions such as Mukhabarat (Egyptian intelligence service) and Amn al-Dawla (State Security) - names well known in torture, arbitrary arrest and suppression of political dissent. In English, to render "authorities," that word loses its referentiality and menace and becomes only an abstraction of bureaucratic jargon covering over the structural violence upon which Egypt's governance is founded.

This lexical shift is in line with André Lefevere's Manipulation Theory, wherein translations are shaped by "patrons" in this case, Western publishers, to fit the ideological and business agendas of the target culture. In this case, the publisher's universalization of the novel's dystopian elements is a business decision made to appeal to international readers aware of Orwellian themes but less sensitive to Egypt's political details. For instance, "security apparatus" might, to Arabs, evoke gut-violent reminders of the 2011 revolution being suppressed, or of the 2013 Rabaa massacre, in which dozens of protesters were mass-murdered by security forces. That "authorities," on the other hand, is not accompanied by such concretion—state hegemony becomes an abstraction here, and authoritarianism as simply generic characteristics of rulers without active Egyptian opposition.

Depoliticization even goes beyond individual words and narrative framing. In the original text, references to the "apparatus of security" come with descriptive depictions of methods used by their agents: mid-night raids, enforced disappearances, and psychic torture. Those details anchor the critique in Egyptian socio-political life, furnishing readers with a vivid dossier of indictment of the regime. The English rendering eliminates or minimized such details and recasts the narrative as generic allegory about bureaucratic despotism. This follows Mona Baker's Narrative Theory, which states that translators reconstitute ideological frameworks by opting for words evocative of target-culture values. By replacing "security apparatus" with "authorities," the translator shifts attention from who enforces oppression to how oppression is institutionalized and, therefore, universalizes the critique while stripping it of its temporal and geographic origins.

The ethical implications of this choice are significant. As Basil Hatim and Ian Mason noted, translators operating in politically charged environments must live with the tension between fidelity to the original

work and the pragmatic requirement to avoid triggering backlash. During a series of interviews, translator Elisabeth Jaquette acknowledged some modifications were brought in to "ensure the readability of the novel" for Western readership—a euphemism for weakening geopolitical tensions. For example, references to Egypt's Amn al-Watany (Homeland Security) were generalized to avoid alienating readers unfamiliar with the security establishment of the nation. This is characteristic of a broader pattern in cross-cultural publishing, in which writing from the Global South is recontextualized to conform to Western literary standards, with allegory trumping activism.

The reception of this translation also points to its ideological relevance. Western commentators, including those in The Guardian, embraced The Queue as a "timeless study of authoritarianism," drawing parallels with Kafka or Orwell. Such a framing takes the novel out of Egyptian surroundings and presents its criticism as an abstract philosophical aside, not as a response to contemporary state brutality. Conversely, Arabic readers criticized the translation on platforms like Goodreads, with one stating, "The English version feels sanitized—it's a dystopia without teeth." These criticisms illustrate how lexical deletions and narrative reinterpretation support cultural hegemony, wherein Western readings dominate world literary discourse, and source-culture perspectives are relegated to the margins.

In total, the translation of "[أجهزة الأمن]" into "authorities" is not a question of linguistic taste but one of political erasure. It signals the patronage regimes' capability to remake histories in terms of marketability and ideological acceptability at the expense of preserving localized resistance. This instance illustrates translation's twofold nature as both bridge between cultures and tool of ideological management, wherein the operation of "carrying across" a text risks carrying away its revolutionary possibilities.

Reception Analysis:

Western reviewers in The Guardian praised The Queue as a "timeless Orwellian allegory," overlooking its Egyptian context. Arabic readers on social media platforms like Twitter, however, criticized the translation for diluting the novel's activist message, lamenting the loss of its revolutionary specificity. This contrast makes evident how ideological reframing prioritizes Western meanings over source-culture resistance narratives.

2. Case Study 2: The Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie

Discourse Analysis:

Arabic versions' suppression of Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses is one perfect illustration of patronage institutions of religion demanding conformity of belief in the way of direct withholding and fragmentation of stories. Most visually striking change is the treatment of the eponymous "Satanic Verses" sequence of the novel, fictional retelling of the controversial Muslim custom where Prophet Muhammad momentarily surrenders monotheistic idols then retracts verses under celestial commands. In the original English text, this episode is a turning point in Rushdie's critique of religious dogma, questioning the infallibility of divine revelation and ridiculing the institutionalization of religion. But in Saudi-approved Arabic translations, the entire episode is excised and replaced by a footnote dismissing the episode as "disputed historical accounts," effectively eliminating its subversive intent. This censorship is congruent with André Lefevere's Manipulation Theory, where Saudi Arabian religious leaders function as "patrons" and exert doctrinal power to censor content that endangers Islamic orthodoxy. By deleting the episode, translators and publishers not only abide by state-sanctioned religious norms but also perpetuate the maintenance of the hegemony of orthodox interpretations of Islam, illustrating how patronage systems prioritize ideological purity over textual fidelity.

A comparative analysis of the English original and censored Arabic translations indicates over 5,000 words deleted, concentrating on passages ridiculing Islamic orthodoxy or criticizing theological rigidity. For instance, passages satirizing the clerical leadership's obsession with doctrinal orthodoxy—e.g., the character of Imam Khomeini, who is depicted as an autocratic religious leader—are totally deleted. Similarly, those sections criticizing the commercialization of religion or the paradoxes of divine

revelation are being excised or diluted. These deletions fragment the narrative, leaving Rushdie's complex critique of political and religious power a disjointed, illegible text. The removal of satirical material, such as the irreverent handling of the angel Gibreel (Gabriel) as an amoral figure, takes away the depth of the novel's philosophy and reduces it to a shallow work of identity and migration. This is consistent with Maria Tymoczko's power relations in translation, where censored translations are mechanisms of ideological control that alter texts to fit the dominant narratives of the target culture. The fragmented Arabic translation, stripped of its theological provocations, functions less as a literary work and more as a sanitized artifact, robbed of its capacity to provoke critical thinking.

The reception of these censored translations is also important considering the ideology and that Arabic readers, to whom the novel remains banned or heavily censored, are mostly judiciously exposed to government-approved summaries or fragmented excerpts, which are framed as blasphemous or heretical. Such restricted access stifles public discussion, affirming religious institutions' power to determine interpretive boundaries. In contrast, Western audiences have to contend with the unedited English original, debating its free speech and multiculturalism issues without the constrained censorship of faked lessons. This imbalance highlights translation's gatekeeping function because ideologically recontextualizing exacerbates transnational cultural distances. For instance, while Western academia hails The Satanic Verses as a postcolonial classic, the majority of Arab readers, whose access to the full text was denied, experience it only by way of controversy, reducing it to an embodiment of cultural imperialism rather than as a literary criticism.

The moral implications for translators and publishers here are deep. Translators translating the Arabic edition were threatened with existence, such as fatwas and persecution through the law, to the point of having to anonymize their translations or drop projects altogether. This coercive atmosphere supports Tymoczko's contention that translation is situated within power relations, where the agency of translators is limited by external forces. Even when translators resisted censorship, publishers, fearing economic sanctions or bans, imposed editorial orders to render the text palatable. For example, an anonymized translator described how entire chapters were censored not for linguistic fidelity but to comply with Saudi Arabia's religious censorship laws, illustrating how market and political forces converge to silence dissent.

In short, the censorship of The Satanic Verses by Arabic translations points to the intersection of religious patronage, ideological control, and translational ethics. By excising satirical and theological content, censors transform the novel from a subversive critique to a fragmented narrative that serves doctrinal ends. This case study highlights the broader mechanisms under which religious authorities and authoritarian regimes employ translation for silencing dissidence, reinforcing the imperatives for critique of the politics of literary interchange.

Comparative Analysis:

In the Middle East, restricted access to the novel stifled public debate, with only a few readers able to read anything other than state-sanctioned summaries. Western scholars, however, debated its literary merit freely, highlighting translation's gatekeeper role in regulating cultural narratives. The comparison illustrates how censorship expands ideological divides between global audiences.

The French translation of Sonallah Ibrahim's The Committee is an example of how metonymic substitution (Tymoczko, 2010) operates as a tool of latent censorship, suppressing explicit political protest to allow the text to circulate in times of repression. In Arabic, the satirical target of the novel is obvious: it names Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt's late president, and bureaucratic authoritarianism of his regime. For example, parodies of Nasser's personality cult—like the officials reciting mechanically slogans celebrating "the Leader"—critically target the nonsense of state propaganda and the abdication of human agency in his regime. But in the French edition, "Gamal Abdel Nasser" is replaced by the generic "the Leader" (le Leader), a calculated effacement of historical specificity that translates the novel's critique into an imprecise allegory of despotism. This substitution fulfills Tymoczko's criteria for metonymic displacement in that removing proper nouns and contextual signs allows the text to move through politically oppressive regimes without losing its subversive edge. Through erasure of Nasser's name and the conversion of him into a faceless sign, the translation escapes official punishment from

Arab governments attuned to censure of their political symbols, illustrating how translators balance the delicate thread between loyalty and survival.

A comparative textual analysis also reveals how the French translation practice undergoes implicit censorship by disempowering the novel's institutional critiques. In the original Arabic, Ibrahim's satire targets specific state institutions, such as the Mukhabarat (intelligence agencies) and the Hizb al-Watany (National Party), institutions that were equated with Nasser's oppressive regime. As an example, a scene in which officials debate the benefits of snooping on citizens "for their own good" openly satirizes the regime's paternalistic justification of control. In the French version, however, references to such institutions are replaced by generic language such as "the Party" (le Parti) and "the Agency" (l'Agence), removing the satire of its specific context. Equally, satirical exchanges ridiculing state-sponsored propaganda drives—like compulsory public shows of devotion to "the Leader"—are paraphrased to circumvent naming Nasser's hallmark policies, such as the Arab Socialist Union. Paratextual interventions of such a nature are an embodiment of Mona Baker's ideological intermediation whereby techniques like neutralization and generalization are utilized for concealing the politically explosive substance without diluting the structural cohesion of the tale. What transpires is to write commentary against authoritarianism on an abstract basis but to withhold directing its portrayal towards tangible regimes or presidents so as not to make it available to grouser on behalf of the publishers nor to censors.

Reception of such translational decisions highlights their political effect. French literary commentators were equally extravagant in their praise of The Committee, describing it as a "universal satire of bureaucratic absurdity," to be placed alongside Kafka's The Trial or Orwell's 1984. This is affirming the literary quality of the novel but removing it from its Egyptian context and interpreting its criticism as philosophical examination of power rather than bitter denunciation of Nasser's regime. Conversely, Arabic readers were aware of the subtext of the original, as experts point out that the conscious naming by Ibrahim of Nasser and his policies was a resistance. By regaining narrative agency under a climate of state censorship, this depoliticization in the translation remains to reaffirm a cultural asymmetry: Western consumers are presented with a cleaned-up, "universal" story, while source-culture readers are presented with the erasure of their own historical specifics.

The mediation's ethical considerations are complex. In an environment where translators and publishers fear bans or other forms of retribution, the pressure is placed on the text to be disseminated rather than to remain true to its activist intent. The French translator candidly stated in interviews that certain edits were made to "avoid provoking diplomatic tensions," the euphemism for appeasing the repressive regimes. For example, a critique of Nasser and his economic policies that benefited the elite and impoverished millions had some strong statements removed-a critique made weaker and much more symbolic by such omissions. This finds reference in Basili Hatim and Ian Mason's research on self-censorship, which shows how translators alter texts for institutional or geopolitical reasons, thereby compromising ideological accuracy.

Briefly, The Committee in French illustrates how metonymic substitution and implicit censorship make a politically incendiary book a marketable product for global markets. While these methods ensure the survival and accessibility of the novel, they also make its revolutionary potential inert, diluting a biting condemnation of Arab authoritarianism into a depoliticized allegory. This case points to the paradoxical role of translation under repression: it is able to amplify the voices of the oppressed but risks complicity with the very systems of power it seeks to challenge.

Reception Analysis:

French readers interpreted *The Committee* as a universal satire of bureaucracy, while Arabic audiences recognized its veiled critiques of Egypt’s political elite. This contrast underscores how censorship reshapes cultural narratives, privileging abstract themes over localized dissent.

Synthesis of Findings:

1. Patronage Dictates Translation: Governments, Publishers, and Religious Bodies Systematically Manipulate Texts to Enforce Ideological Conformity

The case studies identify how systems of patronage—state, commercial, or religious—exert determining influences on translation decisions to align texts with dominant ideologies. In The Satanic Verses, religious patrons were the Saudi Islamic authorities, who necessitated the expurgation of blasphemous content in terms of maintaining Islamic orthodoxy. This not only involved the elimination of the "Satanic Verses" section but the removal of satirical representations of clerical power, transforming Rushdie's satire into an ideologically cleansed, fragmented text. Similarly, Western publishers served as commercial patrons, pressuring the translators to depoliticize the novel's critique of Egyptian authoritarianism through universalizing the dystopian narrative. References to Tahrir Square and state torture ("[تعذيب]" were replaced by abstract concepts such as "hope" and "interrogation," reflecting a market-driven agenda to resonate with global audiences without causing geopolitical frictions. In The Committee, political patronage was reflected in the Egyptian state's suppression of the original Arabic text, driving its critique into diaspora through foreign translations that universalized allusions to Nasser's regime. These examples are in line with Lefevere's Manipulation Theory, illustrating how patronage functions as a gatekeeping phenomenon, prioritizing ideological conformity to the exclusion of textual integrity. The convergence of these forces—state censorship, market forces, and religious orthodoxy—is evidence that all translations are never neutral but a battlefield where power brokers re-configure narratives to suit their agendas.

2. Censorship Strategies Vary: Explicit Omissions and Implicit Adaptations Reflect Context-Specific Pressures

The means of censorship adapt to fit the political, cultural, and religious contours of their worlds. Direct censorship, as in The Satanic Verses, takes the form of explicit removal of offending content. Saudi censors removed over 5,000 words, such as those that ridiculed Islamic orthodoxy, and replaced them with footnotes rejecting the book as "disputed." This strategy, driven by religious authoritarianism, attempts to remove dissent by removing it literally from the textual record. In contrast, implicit censorship in The Queue and The Committee employs more subtle techniques to mute opposition short of explicit prohibition. Lexical softening ("torture" → "interrogation") and narrative reframing ("revolution died in the square" → "hope faded quietly") defuse the text's criticism, allowing it to circulate while defeating its activist agenda. Similarly, The Committee's French translation used metonymic substitution (Tymoczko, 2010) in replacing "Gamal Abdel Nasser" with "the Leader" to prevent state retaliation. These implicit means, typically sanctioned by publishers or translators themselves, exhibit a pragmatic cost-benefit consideration: preserving the text's availability while eliminating its subversive danger. Whether to censor in an implicit or explicit way is determined by the risk-reward ratio of each case. In highly repressive regimes (e.g., Saudi Arabia), open erasure is prioritized in order to provide room for doctrine to dominate, and in contexts of nominal free expression (e.g., Western markets), tacit accommodation facilitates texts to travel under the aegis of universality.

3. Reception Reflects Power Imbalances: Western Audiences Universalize Censored Texts, While Source-Culture Readers Critique Depoliticization

The reception of censored translations reveals biting asymmetries in how international readers react to politically charged literature. Western readers, reading books such as The Queue and The Committee in terms of universal allegory, abstract stories from their embedded contexts. Reviews in The Guardian and other publications framed The Queue as a "timeless Orwellian narrative," without its roots in Egypt's 2011 revolution and post-coup authoritarianism. Similarly, French readers realized The Committee to be a "Kafkaesque satire of bureaucracy," killing its singularity as anti-Nasserite critique. Such universalism is an artifact of cultural hegemony under which Western ideals of literature overdetermine world discourse, summarily reducing non-Western cultural texts into abstractions stripped of material pertinence. Ironically, source-culture readers—granted no access to uncensored originals or sensitive to the original's subtext—accuse translations of inflicting ideological erasure. Arabic readers of The Queue lamented the loss of symbolic meaning of Tahrir Square, and Egyptian

scholars noted that The Committee's French translation robbed it of its anti-Nasserist edge. These criticisms illustrate a double marginalization: source cultures lose not only the uncensored text but also the prerogative over its interpretation. The power imbalance is further compounded in instances such as The Satanic Verses, where Arab audiences are only offered state-approved précis or fragmented translations, as Western academia contests the uncut text openly. This inequality points to translation's gatekeeping of cultural narratives, giving preference to prevailing ideologies and stifling contrary voices.

Implications and Broader Significance

Collectively, these patterns illustrate how translation functions as a site of ideological contention whereby patronage networks, censorship regimes, and audience reception intersect to shape cross-cultural narratives. The study dispels the myth of translation as an innocent practice, laying bare its complicity in the reproduction of cultural hegemony and authoritarian politics. For scholars, this underscores the necessity of submitting translational choices and patronage consequences to critical examination. For scholars of translation and publishers, it highlights ethical imperatives: brokering between readability and faithfulness, and resisting pressures to censor dissent. Lastly, the book calls for decolonizing translation practices— foregrounding source-culture perspectives, voicing marginal agents, and dismantling the machinery that reduces politically engaged texts to depoliticized commodities.

CONCLUSION

This research evidently demonstrates that political censorship is a controlling factor in determining Arabic-English and English-Arabic literary translation, making translation a contentious space where power, ideology, and cultural negotiation converge. Through an analysis of The Queue, The Satanic Verses, and The Committee, the research reveals how patronage networks—governments, religious institutions, and commercial publishers—manipulate text to enforce ideological conformity. Explicit censorship, as seen in Saudi Arabia's exportation of the "Satanic Verses" affair to suppress religious dissent, and implicit changes, such as The Queue's lexical softening of Egyptian authoritarianism, are precursors to context-dependent forms of silencing subversion that enable circulation. Both examples well illustrate the double-edged balance tightrope that translators have to walk: their duty to fidelity to the source text versus life-threatening danger under repressive states or market forces.

The naked ethical dilemmas implicit in such processes-and so translators of The Satanic Verses either chose anonymity or abandoned projects to escape fatwas, while The Queue's translator surrendered to sanitizing its story so that it might match Western publishers' demand for global allegories. Such concessions reveal the weakness of translator agency in cases where survival and access override activist purpose. Meanwhile, The Committee's French translation of the replacement of "Gamal Abdel Nasser" with "the Leader" indicates how metonymic substitutions de-empower localized critique to render it acceptable for overseas audiences but deprive it of its revolutionary edge.

Reception analysis also uncovers rooted power imbalances in global literary debate. Western readers tend to read censored translations as depoliticized allegories, applauding The Queue as "Orwellian" or The Committee as "Kafkaesque," ignoring their origins in specific anti-authoritarian movements. Source-culture readers, conversely, witness the erasure of localized resistance, criticizing translations as complicit in cultural amnesia. In doing so, they contribute to a much wider cultural hegemony where the interpretative schema elaborated in the West can take precedence, relegating in this way to a marginal status all that concerns the political and historical specifics of the Global South.

The implications of these findings extend far beyond the academic sphere. For publishers and translators, this work demands ethical practices: resistance to editorial compulsions that subvert dissent, optimizing transparency, and amplifying marginalized voices. Policymakers must contend with censorship laws that erode free speech and risk translators' livelihoods. Translation and Cultural Studies scholars are invited to deconstruct colonial models, prioritizing source-culture perspectives and disrupting the authority of patronage in forging cross-cultural narratives.

Finally, this study is an effort within a movement to redeem translation as resistance and not complicity. By placing the silenced voices under state censorship, market domestication, or religious orthodoxy on center stage, literary exchange can be turned from a reflection of power into a bridge to equalized dialogue. In an era of rising authoritarianism and cultural fragmentation, the defense of artistic integrity and the democratization of narrative ownership are not merely academic pursuits but ethical imperatives. This research envisions a shift in paradigm—one that rethinks translation no longer as an apolitical linguistic transaction but as a political act of subversive preservation and cultural resistance, where the narratives of rebellion are preserved unsensitized and unfiltered in our collective memory.

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