

## **Stylistic gaps in literary translation from English to Arabic “The Scarlet Letter” translation under critical lens**

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### **Abstract**

The article is titled “Stylistic gaps in literary translation from English to Arabic.

“The Scarlet Letter” translation under critical lens.” It sheds light on the stylistic aspect in the translated literary work and highlights the importance to review translations before edition, and criticize them after. It also aims to draw attention to the crucial role of translation critique in showcasing the vast richness of Arabic language, enabling translations that aspire to overcome the common obstacles faced by translation in general. Our study tries to prove that many translations are in urgent need of assessment, revision, and correction. The quality of a literary translation reflects the literary, linguistic, and stylistic state of the source text and culture.

**Keywords:** Translation, critic, style, literature, error.

### **1. Introduction**

The difficulty to render the same aesthetic aspects in another language is assumed to be a matter of fact, a postulate, and remained the most prominent weak point in translation, and a large gap in the theoretical effort that tries to attenuate the doubts about its possibility. Despite the remarkable advancements in translation studies since the 1960s and the flourishing researches around this linguistic activity to corroborate its scientific bases, achieving equivalence in translating literature and poetry persists as an elusive hope. Many edited novel translations, regardless of their degree of acceptability, are fraught with

awkward structures and errors, some of them are far from the minimal stylistic aspects that a reader should enjoy in original works. This results in a deep need for review, critique, and often re-translation. Literary translation, which had often been marginalized from the sphere of literature, is, still, today, on the periphery of creativity despite its decisive role in enriching literary tastes. These observations, among many others, raise a stream of questions.

What is the main problem of literary translation? Is it truly impossible to achieve stylistic equivalence in novel translation?

In this article, we aim to explore the role of translation critique in reproducing a work that presents the most appropriate stylistic transfer in the host literature and the highest possible degree of linguistic coherence. We will start by defining translation from both linguistic and literary perspectives, and, then, discuss the long-standing impressionistic attitudes against the quality of literary translation. We will try to disprove the narrow false prejudgment in such views by showcasing the objective approach that focuses on reviewing and refining translations, correcting stylistic weakness and inappropriate literal structures. We will try to prove, especially, the role of revisers and the impact of their absence on the final translated work destined to readers.

In the practical section, we will conduct an analytical study on a corpus of some excerpts from various parts of the novel and its translation. By broadening the scope of excerpts, we aim to draw attention to the widespread areas of weakness in the translated work, and the lack of proper critique and refinement. During this process, we carry out a comparative analysis through which we attempt to uncover how the component *style* could be neglected in translation and investigate the reasons behind that. The comparison enables us to detect and address instances of weakness, since it offers objective data for constructive critique of the translation

which help propose solutions to the issues encountered.

We will rely primarily on Antoine Berman's critical approach and the steps he outlined for translation criticism, using them as a framework for examining the selected samples. This helps us avoid impressionistic judgments and develop the analysis with the highest degree of objectivity. Our second main basis will be the common literary and stylistic lessons in assessing the translation as a literary product.

We have chosen to focus on literary translation because it is the vital domain where style flourishes, and errors can easily be hidden without being noticed by readers who usually tend to consume the plot and the main events, not style in a novel translation. As we stated, here before, because literary translation has long underwent a widespread impressionistic judgments that generalized random preconceptions even about good translations, instead of being exposed to academic critique to highlight strengths and weaknesses in it.

The final aim of this paper is to emphasize the urgent need for critique in literary translation, given its essential role in honing the skills of translators in this challenging field. Even a few critical observations can help to fairly assign responsibility to the translator and relieve a language with deep-rooted rhetorical and

poetic traditions like Arabic from the burden of preconceptions, and demonstrate the immensity of its lexical horizon and the flexibility of its rules for a better style. We will prove its high ability to fully and confidently accommodate foreign literature and its aesthetics without losing its essential characteristics or compromising its innate elegance and cultural depth.

## **2. What is translation?**

### **2.1 It is a linguistic process:**

John Cunnison Catford in *A linguistic Theory of Translation* gives this simple but very strict definition :

« *The replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)* »<sup>1</sup>

It seems very strict from a pure linguistic view, since he focused on the superficial aspect of language and neglected the most important element in this process which meaning, and a more essential aspects in literature which is the special creative use of language.

Later with the great progress in translation studies, some specialists started to afford all what could help the academic basis of this field. Among the best efforts we find a translation terminology which gives the following definition:

*“An interlinguistic transfer procedure comprising the (interpretation) of the*

*(sense) of a (source text) and the production of a (target text) with the intent of establishing a relationship of (equivalence) between the two (texts), while at the same time observing both the inherent communication parameters and the (constraints) imposed on the (translator).”*<sup>2</sup>

The revision of the definition is clear here, and some key words like “interpretation, sense, equivalence, inherent constraints” show the deeper dimensions of translation. However, the aesthetic aspect is yet excluded from the transfer equation. This is to say that translation can be more than a linguistic transfer.

### **2.2 Translation is a literary recreation:**

In Classical prosperous Greece, practitioners considered translation as a literary task requiring the same conditions as literary creation<sup>3</sup>. Early scholars **were** unanimous on that a wordsmith and belletrist must be fully conversant with language, well-read, knowledgeable, and eloquent. Those are, almost, the same requirements and conditions as a good translator. This view, which has exerted particular influences later on, stems from the fact that the first who were interested in translation were writers and orators experienced in rhetoric, such as Cicero, Saint Jerome, and Quintilian.

This observable affinity between translation and literature seemed to be

shared by literary spheres in the Arab world. The first to take a real interest in translation was a prominent exceptional name Ibn al-Muqaffa “ *The Persian Ruzbih, better known as 'Abdullah Ibnu 'l-Muqaffa', made several translations from the Pehlevi or Middle-Persian literature into Arabic. We possess a specimen of his powers in the famous 'Book of Kalila and Dimna, which is ultimately derived from the Sanscrit Fables of Bidpai.'*”<sup>4</sup>. He had not left any notes or observation on translation that could serve as an early initial approach about this activity, but his translation of the fables of Bidpai from Persian, collected in the famous unique prose work *Kalila and Dimna*, was of a deep effect in literature and public, as a translation “*The Arabic version is one of the oldest prose works in that language, and is justly regarded as a model of elegant style, though it has not the pungent brevity which marks true Arabian eloquence*”<sup>5</sup>. It enjoyed unparalleled acclaim since it had been always among the rare prose and novel works from that era<sup>6</sup>.

As for al-Jahiz, the phenomenon caught his attention due to its expansion in Abbasid prosper era. although he had not tried anything in translation, except the supposed readings around it, his firm disapproving observations could not serve as precursor notes to an Arabic theory of translation.

These observations were not prescriptive as much as they were critical of poor works. Al-Jahiz ventured when he said that the virtue of poetry was limited to the Arabs, and then, is impossible to be translated<sup>7</sup>, which is yet accepted and supported today. His argument for this strict opposition of the possibility and the role of literary translation is that the striking difference between languages takes away from poetry its essential characteristics, mainly rhythm and meter. He paid little attention to other components of poetry, such as the general content and stylistic features. However, he showed some moderation regarding prose translation, preferring the original prose to the product of a prose translation<sup>8</sup>.

Later on, modern comparative literature research noted that the first translations of fictional literature in its three genres were undertaken by novelists and poets, both unknown amateurs and renowned professionals, such as Tanios Abdou, Taha Hussein, Gibran Khalil Gibran, Ahmed Hassan al-Zayyat, and Abdel Rahman Badawi.

Among modern translation theorists who rejected reduce translation to a mere process of words transfer, we find Edmond Cary, who categorically refuses that literary work can be treated in a superficial linguistic process, arguing that “ *The linguistic context only forms the raw material of the operation: it is the much*

*more complex context of the relationships between two cultures, of the world of thought and of sensitivity, which truly characterizes translation. To define in a word the nature of this operation, let us say elliptically that it constitutes a literary operation."*<sup>9</sup>. He justifies this by referring to that poetry, literary prose, or simultaneous translation are not possible for a translator untalented in these fields, since without talent, his lexical knowledge alone remains always insufficient.

Despite these convincing views about translation as a literary activity, the linguistic essence and nature of the operation cannot be denied. Fawcett gave a strong impetus to the relationship between translation and linguistics when he showed *that it could take two directions: either the practice of translation could invest in the findings of linguistics in its research, or we could formulate a linguistic theory of translation so that it would not remain subject to literary, economic, or psychological theory*<sup>10</sup>.

The reasonable limit that could be tolerated is the preference of a specialist in each field of translation.

To pretend that literary translation transcends to be an art, may make it of a great deal and perhaps impossible for non-talented translators, et will be an exception to reach high degree of stylistic equivalence. Science of translation proves today that translators can be trained to

make good literary translation, since, *in fact, it proves very difficult to devise criteria for distinguishing, in any systematic way, between what constitutes literary and non-literary discourse; whatever is said to characterize the one will also be present, to some degree at least, in the other*<sup>11</sup>.

### **3. Novel translation**

A novel is a long story characterized by its chronological expanse and a comprehensive psychological description of multiple characters. It may be fictional, inspired by its author, or largely based on reality. It is also characterized by its multitude of themes and events, intertwined with themes such as politics, love, misery, crime, psychological complexities, and social concerns<sup>12</sup>.

The translator may encounter a poem written in a simple language and style, and gets it easy to achieve a high degree of transfer of form and content. But he may encounter a prose piece, like *The Scarlet Letter*, written in such a genuine style and symbolic allusive words that obliterates the horizon of a stylistic equivalence in translation which should be possible with the genre of novel.

For Newmark a translator must pay close attention to the aesthetic function where language is designed to please the senses, firstly through its actual or imagined sound, and secondly through its metaphors. In

translating expressive texts - in particular, poetry - there is often a conflict between the expressive and the aesthetic function 'truth' and 'beauty' - the poles of ugly literal translation and beautiful free translation.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. Stylistic issue

Style is of the oldest and most complicated issues in literature because its changing nature and instable manifestation in the great number of different literary works, either poetry or prose. According to the dictionary of literary terms "*style is a manner of expression, describable in linguistic terms, justifiable and valuable in respect of non-linguistic factors.*"<sup>14</sup>. By manner, critics are unanimous on that what is meant is choice of specific word from a set of synonyms, but in accordance to the other words in the sentence or the poetic verse.

The novel's style is not devoid of imagery and aesthetic devices. Some novelists embroider a poetic language that may seem more complex than some poems "*The signal importance of the translation of some novels has been the introduction of a new vision injecting a different literary style into another language*"<sup>15</sup>. While conveying a social, civilized, and humane message occupies a modest space in the novel, we find that some tendency to seduce the reader with poetic language gain more prevalence in some prosaic works. This puts the translator before a great

challenge, rather than pruning the thorny areas to engage with the novel's style.

Among the thorny areas, a translator must focus, in his analysis of the novel's style, on its most important aspects, such as clarity or complexity, beauty or simplicity, superficiality and depth in analyzing events and stylistic features. These are all characteristics that must be manifested by a way or another at the level of language. The translator's success in controlling these stylistic features and conveying them during linguistic translation, or compensating them when impossible, depends on his solid literary competency, not only linguistic.

#### 5. Criteria of a good literary translation

If a translation involves even the slightest change, it will be considered treason, and any excess is suspected of plagiarism. No example is more horrific than the scathing criticism levied by Antoine Berman on the manipulation of translation. The critique reaches its peak when the translator bears moral responsibility for certain lapses and of doubts hover around a dissimulated intentions. This demonstrates the difficulty of the translator's task and the absence of objective and systematic evaluation criteria to guide his performance. Nevertheless, the basic principles of translation evaluation cannot be overlooked.

Tyler recommends a good translation to gather content, style, and ease of the original text<sup>16</sup>. He defends the possibility to perform a literary, and even a poetic, equivalence even if the translator faces the risk to make some changes. We can say that aesthetic aspects are more important than content for Tyler.

Walter Benjamin, after questioning the task of translating a literary work and what it should convey, says : « *Its essential quality is not statement or the imparting of information. Yet any translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but information-hence, something unessential. This is the hall mark of bad translations.* »<sup>17</sup>.

This is what Jiri Levy supports when he goes on to compare creative and non-creative translators, saying:

« ...creative translators are able to imagine the realities they are expressing, reaching beyond the text to identify the characters, situations and ideas that lie behind it, whereas non-creative translators merely perceive the text mechanically and merely translate words. »<sup>18</sup>.

For Nida, the success of the translation depends, above all, on achieving equivalent effect or response. It is one of the four basic requirements of a translation he suggested: it should make sense; convey the spirit and manner of the original; have a natural and

easy form of expression and produce a similar response<sup>19</sup>.

A specialized translation review is part of the translator's job. It is preferable for an experienced translator to conduct it. He should compare the translation to the original and verify if it ensures accuracy, completeness, fluency, good composition, and suitability for the purpose and use conventions. And if it is free from errors or any subjective tendencies which may impose some changes and omissions. Some methods and strategies had well been suggested to evaluate the translation of general texts, but they could only superficially address the aesthetic aspect of literary translation. If an original literary work is naturally subject to critical scrutiny for evaluation, its translation will be between a rock and a hard place. Translators address it with corrections and sometimes retranslation, while writers, to whom it should be a guest, think about the original and doubt it if it will gain popularity. We can say that translation should not aspire to perfection and compete with local literary production in the absence of agreed-upon technical criteria for determining its acceptability.

## **6. Antoine Berman's model :**

Antoine Berman proposed a methodology for translation criticism in his book *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne (Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne)*. In the introduction, he noted that he

was initially preparing a synthesis on translation for the university, intending to gather the essence of his scattered works. However, the chapter in which he analyzed translations grew extensively, revealing to him a significant void in the field of translation studies: the critique. Thus, the initial project took a new direction: proposing a methodology for translation critique. His proposal was widely welcomed, and his defense of the utmost fidelity and literalness in translation was deeply appreciated due to the solid argumentative framework he used to support his viewpoint.

We can say that Berman's work filled a major theoretical gap in translation studies and provided literary translation with a solid critical foundation, granting its legitimate recognition within local host literature. This is why we have chosen to adopt the steps of his methodology in the applied section of this article.

### **6.1 Reading the Translation More than one time:**

Berman emphasizes to avoid hasty judgment and recommends reading the translation (or multiple translations of the same work) repeatedly. He warns the translation critic not to approach the text with a preconception that lacks trust in the translated work, or with excessive suspicion toward possible errors and poor translation quality. The critic should be entirely neutral. Before the first reading, the critic

should remember that he is facing a *foreign work* that has been transferred into his language<sup>20</sup>. Berman believes that the critic must try to detect areas of tension in the translation, such as weaknesses, inappropriateness, disruptions in rhythm, or stylistic choices and structures, or expressions that seem alien to the target language common use, what he calls "language contagion."

### **6.2 Reading the Original**

This reading must shift from a sort of mental scan to a form of preliminary analysis. Through it, a critic should focus on identifying stylistic features that reflect the uniqueness of the original work and its language. The critic may rely on samples from the core components of the literary work, such as lexical choices, sentence structures, and images. During this reading, the critic should try to pinpoint the strengths of the original text and select stylistic samples that embody its expressive and symbolic density. This process can only be effective through interpretation of the original artistic work<sup>21</sup>.

### **6.3 Researching the Translator**

It will be useful to be informed about the translator's background and his relationship with the translated work. For example, whether the translator is the original author, if he was a contemporary of the author, or if the work is translated from an original language or via an intermediary language.



It's also important to know whether the translator is a professional or an amateur, and whether the translation is supported by accompanying essays or studies, or has been promoted through literary events or awards. All of this can help understand the translator's inclinations and motivations, justify his level of performance, neutrality, or even helps find the cause of errors occurrence<sup>22</sup>.

#### **6.4 Translator's Horizon**

This refers to the need for the critic to trace the translator's approach and orientation, whether it's a first translation or a retranslation. The critic must examine the literary scene at the time the translation was produced and the surrounding literary and cultural movements<sup>23</sup>. Berman places significant importance on the phenomenon of retranslation and earlier translations, which can impact the translator by encouraging divergence, improvement, or correction, thus contributing to higher translation quality. He also highlights the role of the prevailing literary movement as a horizon that may guide the translator to adopt a particular artistic form in this act of re-creation.

#### **6.5 Translation Analysis**

According to Berman, the forms of analysis vary depending on the literary genre being translated and whether the analysis covers the entire work or a portion of it. He recommends analyzing a complete work, a

full story or poem, rather than isolated sentences or decontextualized fragments. Ideally, the analysis should also consider other translations produced by the same translator to better reveal their tendencies, methods, and style<sup>24</sup>.

#### **6.6 Texts Comparison:**

Berman proposes four directions for comparison:

First, a critic starts to compare selected elements and excerpts in the original with their equivalents in the translation.

Second, he can make a reverse comparison from the translation to the original, and must focus on parts that the translator might have found problematic or particularly well-executed, and verify in the original the causes of difficulty or easiness.

Third, if there are other existing translations, the comparison could extend to them, and focus on the same segments highlighted in the previous steps.

Fourth and last, the translation should be compared with the translator's declared project or intentions. This final step puts the translation under the test of the methodological path it took to achieve its aims, revealing the translator's subjectivity, choices, and reasons, as well as the resulting impact. It asks whether the translation remained faithful to its intended purpose or deviated due to contradictions or external influences<sup>25</sup>.

## 6.7 Style of Comparison

By “style,” Berman refers to the language of analysis, especially its terminology. He criticizes the use of overly technical or obscure language borrowed from linguistics or complex conceptual fields, which can alienate non-specialists<sup>26</sup>. He warns that such analytical closure might prevent a clear and accessible reading and hinder natural critical discourse. Translation criticism should aim to open up the text for diverse audiences, which requires a balanced approach in both style and language.

## 6.8 Basis for Evaluation

Berman insists that criticism must culminate in an evaluation of the translated work. This evaluation should meet the expectations of readers and align with the nature of each individual reading. However, he raises a crucial issue: evaluation might be biased toward a particular approach or philosophy of translation, making it subjective and potentially influenced by external factors<sup>27</sup>.

To address this, Berman proposes a dual criterion that balances two essential standards widely accepted among translators and scholars: ethics of translation and poetics of translation. By *Poetics* Berman means the translator’s ability to produce a text that matches the original in textual quality. Achieving a full translation doesn’t require a pre-determined

method or style, even if the translator feels their work is only a faint reflection or echo of the original, they should still strive to produce a translation that is poetic and worthy of comparison. *Ethics*, on the other hand, involves the full respect of the integral original text. The lack of respect can be seen in any distortion, in obliterating the translator’s presence, and any changing that touches the identity of the original work. The translation should not be mistaken for an original work in the target language. This ethical principle forms the core of Berman’s vision of translation.

## 7. Samples and analysis :

### 7.1 The novel:

It is a historical novel by American author Nathaniel Hawthorne, published in 1850.

### 7.2 Summary:

*The Scarlet Letter* tells the story of Hester Prynne, a young woman living in a Puritan community in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The events of the novel take place between 1642 and 1649. At the beginning of the novel, Hester Prynne is accused of having sinned with a man from the village, whose name she refuses to reveal, and of having had a child with him. She is condemned by her society to wear the letter “A” on her chest, which initially symbolizes “Adultery”. The meaning changes

throughout the novel, later representing words like “Ability” or “Angel.”

At the same time, her lawful husband returns after many years of absence from the Boston community and discovers that his wife is accused of a shameful betrayal. Under the name Roger Chillingworth, he pretends to be a physician and came to live with the Native Americans.

He seeks to avenge his honor and swears to find the guilty man, as he refuses to let his wife endure alone the punishment imposed by the intolerant society. He suspects that the true culprit is actually the community's minister, Arthur Dimmesdale. Indeed, the latter appears to be consumed by guilt, lives in isolation, and punishes himself through self-flagellation. Chillingworth vows to push him to the edge, to force him to confess, or even drive him to suicide.

Hester tries to warn the minister about her husband. Dimmesdale, indifferent to his own fate, does not react and torture himself by being consumed by guilt and deep regret. He confesses his sin publicly, in broad daylight, on the scaffold, with Hester Prynne and their daughter Pearl at his side, no longer able to live racked with the burden of the remorse.

### 7.3 Sample One

« A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments, and gray, steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing

hoods and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes. »<sup>28</sup>

"جمع من رجال ملتحين في ثياب قاتمة حزينة وقبعات رمادية طويلة مخروطة، يختلطون بنساء منهن عارية الرأس ومنهن من ترتدي قلنسوة، تجمعوا كلهم أمام بناء خشبي له باب ثقيل من خشب السنديان تزيينه مسامير كبيرة لها رؤوس ضخمة." <sup>29</sup>

### Commentary:

From a first reading of the original extract and the translation, we can find the same content, even in the same words, except some functional shifts on the grammatical level. This allows us to judge the translation successful as whole, since it gave, almost, an exact semantic equivalent of the content. This may be explained by the fact that the ideas of the source text were clear, and the words were of the general lexis. There was no need, for example to borrowing, or to a note to corroborate the meaning.

The punctuation shifts are remarkable, and seem random, but they had not an apparent effect of high degree. However, they made the translation miss the available opportunity of a clear reading of the ideas, a better appreciation of the style. The prepositions "في" and "و" had been good substitutes of the two commas of the original. The verb "تزيينه" was, also, a stylistic maneuver to avoid the comma, since a verb, if well placed, makes the

description moving. But the transposition of the adjective “intermixed” to a verb "يختلطون" made the first part of this long statement a complete sentence which can take a full stop.

As a general observation on the lexical level, we can say that the translation followed the original text, and seems very literal compared to the stylistic opportunities available for a pure stylistic text such as by Nathaniel Hawthorn, with some exaggeration in sticking to the vocabulary of origin.

The translator says even "في ثياب" where he could say "عليهم ثياب", those clothes seem imposed by that time and the religious fanaticism. In Arabic the preposition "على" tells more than the simple "في". The choices "جمع" and "تجمعوا" left some heaviness, as if some repetition is imposed, and was far from any stylistic effect. It seemed that the translator had been depicting each word, and had not made a style tasting revision. The word "جمع" is not the unique issue for « throng », since the arabic lexis can afford "رهط، نفر، عصابة، لمة، فصيل، جماعة، حشد، جمهرة، لفيف، فئة، زمرة، شيعه". Starting by the verb, as arabic intrinsic genius prefers, would be easier for the rest of the meaning and for a better stylistic structure. The verb feeds the event with time and some movement.

The verb "يختلطون" for a participial adjective « intermixed » can bear an implicit extra-information that was not possibly hidden or truly expressed in the

original: the verb in present simple refers more to an action than a previous common state, and the action can mean that there is *intention* in some moment from the men to intermix with women. But from the context we can read a simple description of a random crowd of men with women, without any deep religious shame to condemn a sinful woman. To start by a verb would be more convenient for a narrative purpose.

The construction "ثياب قاتمة حزينة وقبعات رمادية طويلة مخروطة" presents no problem, on the semantic level, but since we are dealing with a literary translation of a fine level, the row of five adjectives to describe garments, made the sentence very plain and monotone. Hawthorn's descriptive long sentences offer more than one way to render the meaning with a saturated style. The verbs "يشيع منها، يجللها، يلقيها، يسودها لون الحزن" could break that monotony and let a deeper descriptive print. For the lexical unit "قبعات" the verb "يعتمرون" feeds the events with some temporal dynamicity and life, as if acts had been happening one after the other without interruption, and some moments only separated them. The same remark fits the use "منهن من سترته", with some reserve on the semantic level : the choice "عارية الرأس" was not the only or the best correspondent. The head in Arabic, and the hair particularly, is either "مكشوف" or "مستور، متحجب، مختمر، مجل بخمار، بحجاب". The word "عارٍ" fits better other parts of the

body that should strictly be covered such as the bosom and the intimate organs.

The possessive structure "له باب ثقيل" was a bit away from literary fine succinct language which dislikes the superfluous needless excess of prepositions. The prepositional structure "له" overloads the simple description of an ancient door, and can mean that there was a state of real possession. A simpler shift in the role, like "بابه ثقيل", would give an easier and finer structure. Inanimate objects like a door must not be personified where they should remain a part of the decor. The adjective "خشبي" which describes the whole building was enough to let the reader understand that what is meant by "من السنديان" is the kind of wood, not the tree itself. The tow words left in the translation a sort of thick redundancy.

As for the word "تُرِيْنُهُ", the verb was not a strategic choice, even if correct on the semantic level. The translation missed again, as in many areas of the novel, a golden occasion to render meaning in a refined style. It is not a mistake, of course to translate "studded with" by "تُرِيْنُهُ" but in this context, if well tasted, the verb "stud" attracts more attention to something pierced, hardly pushed and fixed, like those heavy iron spikes. In literary translation we have a minimal margin to present an idea or a meaning in a metaphoric structure, if it will not take, or obnubilate it. The Arabic lexis affords many synonyms for better

expressions like "دُقَّت فيه مسامير، غُرزت فيه" or the verb "أثخنه مسامير.." to say "أثخن" since this verb means « weaken » and goes along with a later description in the same chapter where the author says “the wooden jail was already marked with weather-stains and other indications of age”.

We suggest the following translation for the passage:

(اجتمع رهط من رجال ملتحين، عليهم ثياب يشيع من لونها الحزن، اعتمروا قبعات رمادية طويلة مخروطية، مختلطين بنساء منهن كاشفات الرأس ومنهن من سترته بقلنسوة، أمام بناء خشبي بابه ثقيل من السنديان أثخنه مسامير كبيرة ذات رؤوس ضخمة.)

#### 7.4 Sample tow:

« Certain it is that, some fifteen or twenty years after the settlement of the town, the wooden jail was already marked with weather-stains and other indications of age, which gave a yet darker aspect to its beetle-browed and gloomy front. »<sup>30</sup>

"ولم تمض خمسة عشرة سنة أو عشرون على إنشاء البلدة حتى ظهرت على السجن آثار الرياح وعلامات الشيخوخة الأخرى التي أضفت هيئة أشد قتامة على واجهته الكئيبة المرشوقة برؤوس مسامير سوداء كأنها خفافس." <sup>31</sup>

#### Commentary :

The omission of « certain it is that » and « wooden » is clear and without any

stylistic purpose. They could be easily rendered.

There is a deep structural shift in the translation to a negative form, the original sentence could be translated as :

" من المؤكد أن آثار أحوال الطبيعة ووطأة الغمر،  
وبعد زهاء خمسة عشر سنة أو عشرين، من إنشاء  
البلدة، قد ارتسمت على السحن الخشبي."

In arabic the structure "لم.... حتى" doesn't fit the context of a long period with the adverb « early » which highlights the surprise (the abnormal past tense, as if the action is very recent) radical changes that should take a longer time.

More omission cases need attention like the unit "بضع،" which could have "بضع، زهاء، قرابة.." the implicit intent is to minimize the period even if it can seem long, since we deal with years.

The verb "ظهرت" is not the best choice to describe an effect that appears progressively after many years, and it seems very plain, if we remember other words to express the same idea. Arabic lexis can afford far more better substitutes that mean the nuance of gradual appearing of an effect or a status like "ارتسم، بدى، انحفرت، توشم، تلاوحت فيه،" besides these choices, it is to be noted that the verb in the original « is marked with.. » gives the possibility to be modulated to the active form, more

"غيرته أحوال" easy sentence in arabic  
الطبيعة، غيرت لونه عوامل الجو، "

We cite this omissions to highlight the contrast with some nonfunctionals units added without any stylistic intention or effect : like أخرى أشد، which could be avoided or replaced by stylistic choices. We suggest here "أقتم".

We can say that the lexical unit "الشيخوخة" is very insuitable to describe an inanimate object like a door, and perhaps even disapointing for old persons. A mytonimic stylistic maneuvre like "علامات ووطأة السنين.." could be the least a transltor can do to avoid such a lexical abuse in translation. The word "شيخ", and the adjective derived from it, refers to humans and means more than « old physical status». It remembers the final step of life and let a sad impression, but can have a ameliorative aspect like wisdom and long experience in life, since it refers to a high rank, due to age, and the reverence that "old men" deserve.

In the last part of this excerpt :

"which gave a yet darker aspect to its beetle-browed and gloomy front."

"التي أضفت هيئة أشد قتامة على واجهته الكئيبة  
المرشوقة برؤوس مسامير سوداء كأنها خفافس"  
we can underline a mistake in translating  
"beetle-browed". This compound adjective

means "heavy, prominent, and overhanging eyebrows". It can also describe someone who looks "gloomy, sullen, or frowning" and the latter, is the intended meaning in this context. There is no mention of "iron pikes" here, so the comparison is not the case. All the description targets the "front" of the prison door.

That figure is very important because it will convey in the translation a deeper symbolic aspect of Hawthorne's work. The description of the jail's "beetle-browed and gloomy front" animates the structure, almost as if the building itself is the first man who invented it, and has a dark, menacing face. "Beetle-browed" suggests something sinister or threatening, and "gloomy" reinforces the idea of despair or suffering associated with this place of punishment. The weathered jail could symbolize the moral decay of the society it represents. Its aging and darkening features could reflect the increasing weight of the sins, judgments, and hypocrisy in the town. The jail is not just a physical building but a symbol of punishment and societal judgment, which only grows darker and more oppressive over time.

We suggest the following translation for the excerpt:

"ولا ريب في أنه لم تكد تنقضى خمسة عشرة سنة أو عشرون على إنشاء البلدة، حتى ارتسمت على السجن آثار الطقس ووطأة العمر (السنين، الزمن)، التي

تركت سحنةً (صبغةً) أقتم على واجهته الكئيبة المنكسة المتجهمة."

## 7.5 Sample three:

« He groped along as stealthily, with as cautious a tread, and as wary an outlook, as a thief entering a chamber where a man lies only half asleep,—or, it may be, broad awake,—with purpose to steal the very treasure which this man guards as the apple of his eye. In spite of his premeditated carefulness, the floor would now and then creak; his garments would rustle; the shadow of his presence, in a forbidden proximity, would be thrown across his victim. In other words, Mr. Dimmesdale, whose sensibility of nerve often produced the effect of spiritual intuition, would become vaguely aware that something inimical to his peace had thrust itself into relation with him."<sup>32</sup>

"تسلل متلصصاً بخطوة حذرة ونظرة حريصة يقظة كلص داخل إلى حجرة يستلقي فيها رجل نصف نائم، أو لعله مستيقظ تمام اليقظة، ليسرق نفس الكنز الذي يحرسه هذا الرجل كحبة عينه. وبرغم حرصه وحذره المبيت تفرقع الأرض بين حين وحين، أو تخشخش ثيابه، أو يرتمي ظله عندما يقترب اقتراباً محرماً على ضحيته. ويقول آخر، كان السيد "ديسمدال" ذو الحساسية المرهفة التي تتحول إلى فطنة روحية يشعر بأن شيئاً معادياً لراحته وسلامته أقحم نفسه عليه."<sup>33</sup>

## Commentary:

This excerpt is took from the tenth chapter "The Leech and his Patient". In this area of

the novel, Roger Chellingsworth, the disguised doctor, tries to penetrate in the inner dark world of the reverend Dimmesdale. The author compares this quiet and secret penetration to a scene of a thief entering a room where a man is half asleep. We must remember that the doctor is presented in the novel as physically and psychologically mysterious and evil. His single-minded pursuit of retribution reveals him to be the most malevolent character.

The translation succeeded in reshaping the inner meaning of the simile scene of guilt and secrecy. Arabic words take the reader close to interpret the image of a thief trying to steal a treasure which mirrors Dimmesdale's internal conflict with guilt and the secret of his sin. How he's unable to truly escape his own conscience, and how the external world, through creaking floors, rustling clothes, betrays his internal state.

As a first remark, a striking direct repetition hits the reader in the duals  
متلصصا/ كلص، رجل/ هذا الرجل، مستيقظ/ تمام  
اليقظة، حين/ وحين، يقترب/ اقتربا

Arabic lexicon is far richer to be constrained to such heavy superfluous redundancy. The verb "تسلل" expresses the state of "متلصص", so it could be omitted. The misinterpretation of the adjective "very" left an error that may lead to misunderstand the roles: by "نفسه" we can understand that the two men guard the same treasure, while we have

a thief and a guard! The word means "true, real" which may be rendered in arabic by "الحقيقي". The second "هذا الرجل" could be easily replaced by an attached pronoun. The verb "مستيقظ" only would be enough to make the contrast between « half-asleep » and « broad awake », if there is a need to intensify the meaning, the stressed form "متيقظ" is available in arabic. To attenuate this atmosphere of repetition "بين حين وآخر" would be necessary, since "بين حين وحين" is correct. The simple "الحظة قُرب، دنوّ .." would serve the meaning without any repetition.

The translation should start by the least allusion to display clearly this long metaphoric description, because at first reading, one thinks that the scene of a thief is real not a metaphorical. The expression "في عتمة تلك النفس" would be one of other possible suggestions.

The close similarity in the category of some words reveals a strict unreasonable attachment to the source text. By "متلصصا" the translator forced the unit "الـ", a noun rarely and perhaps never used as adjective or verb. The gerund "داخل" and the adjectival "نصف" and the structure "أقحم نفسه" and "شينا معاديا لنفسه" which is far from the principle of « achieving a dynamic equivalent in literary translation ». As if the TL does'nt afford other than these exclusive possibilities, the translator restricted the



meaning there where he could invest more in Arabic.

Apart from the possibility to make some least changes to retake style and aesthetic aspects of the original, this blind literal rewording could be manifestly avoided.

"راح يتلمسُ في عتمة تلك النفس ببصيرة وخطي مُتنبّهين، مثل لص تسلل حيثُ يستلقي رجل نصف نائم، وربما متيقظ تماماً، ليختلس الكنز عينه الذي يحرسه ذلك الرجل كأغلى ما لديه. ولكن رغم ذلك الحذر الشديد تصدّر من الأرض جلبّة ومن الثياب خفيف، أو يمر الظل على الضحية لحظة قرب مُحرم. وبعبارة أخرى، فإن السيد ديمسديل، بجسّ مرهف يؤول لفطنة روحية، يتحسس، على نحو غامض، أن خبثاً ينافي سلامه الروحي يتوغّل في سريره (داخله، دخلاءه، نفسه)." <sup>34</sup>

#### 7.6 Sample four:

« It was only the darkened house that could contain her. When sunshine came again, she was not there. Her shadow had faded across the threshold. The helpful inmate had departed, without one backward glance to gather up the meed of gratitude, if any were in the hearts of those whom she had served so zealously. »<sup>34</sup>

"وكنّت تجد هيوستر في البيوت التي أطفأت نورها المصائب وحسب. فإذا أشرقت الشمس مرة ثانية، اختفت وذاب ظلها على عتبة الباب وترحل المساعدة الحبيبة دون أي نظرة خلفها لتجني اعترافاً بالجميل، إن كان ثمة اعتراف بجميل في قلوب الذين أحببتهم." <sup>35</sup>

The author, unlike his habit and far from the wordy style, describes here in succinct sentences some aspects of the deep altruist behavior of Hester Prynne, the instinctive philanthropic return to the society.

The ideas in the original and the translation are the same, as a whole, but not in the same style.

This excerpt, particularly, had been chosen to show the cases where some changes are necessary to save the aesthetic aspect in literary translation. The words and structures present no difficulty, since they have their direct correspondents in target language, but neglecting the literary stylistic needs can give for example :

"كانت المنازل المظلمة هي الوحيدة التي يمكن أن تحتويها. وإن عاد شروق الشمس مجدداً، لا تكون هناك. يتلاشى ظلها عند عتبة الباب. رحلت المُقيمة المساعدة دون أي نظرة خلفها لتجني اعترافاً بالجميل، إن كان ثمة اعتراف بجميل في قلوب الذين أحببتهم."

The disappearance of all stylistic touch is quiet clear in this literal rewording, despite the absence of any translation error of any kind. The translator made a praiseworthy attempt to deliver the ideas from the original linguistic structures, when he took some margin of liberty, but did not invested well this liberty in a rich language like Arabic.

#### Commentary :

The choice "كنت تجد" seems very plain if we think about the possibility to profit the narrative auxiliary "كان" and another verb which implies the idea of "توجد" and say for example "كانت ترتاد، تخدم، تُلَازِم، تلتأخر عن..". The verb "contain her" offer a larger semantic and stylistic horizon to the translator.

The figurative participle "darkened" gave a great chance to be well rendered in Arabic, and the translator gathered a good set words, but made a somehow awkward structure when he, first get attached to the juxtaposition of the subject and an object which was of no semantic or stylistic value. The reflexive "انطفأ نورها من المصائب" would let an easier structure. The choice "مصائب" seems to mean, somewhat, over then what « darken » connotes. Arabic lexis offers, besides "أظلمت من الحزن، جن فيها ليل" "الأحزان، أعتمت من النوائب، أهلكتها الأحزان.." which may seem closer to the original idea and of closer stylistic touch to Hawthorn.

It is worth note that the choice "ذاب ظلها" gave a dim metaphor due to the verb "ذاب" which did not fit the disappearance of a "shadow". The verb "fade" means "disappear gradually" and describes often "light and brightness", which can be simply rendered in arabic by "خفت", "تلاشى، توارى". And we must pay attention that by "shadow" the author designates "Hester", he compares her presence to

the state of a shadow, to say that she was ill estimated.

The verb in Arabic means literally "melt" and should be said for metals or ice for example, its meaning is sometimes borrowed to describe "melt a heart of love" because a heart is an organ, palpable, and is closer to the physical status of metals or rocks. A shadow is seen but cannot be touched, it is considered as an "effect" and this makes it heavy to read "ذاب الظل، ذاب الأثر، ذاب الشعور..".

We suggest the following translation:

" كانت هيستر ترتاد (تُلَازِم، تُرابِطُ، تخدمُ) المنازل التي أظلمت من المصائب، فإن أشرقت الشمس فيها مجدداً، تلاشى طيفها عند عتبة الباب. رحلت النديمة المعينة دون أن تلتفت (وتربأ أن تلتفت) لتسمع اعترافاً بجميل، إن كان منه شيء في قلوب من خدمتهم بلهف وإخلاص."

## 8. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have addressed the phenomenon of style in literary translations. Through some samples taken from an edited translation of a masterpiece of English literature, still in circulation and accessible to readers. We noted that some publishing houses turn a blind eye to weak translations, and even full of errors. Given this situation, we intend to stress the utmost importance that must be given to review and critique translations. Academic and literary efforts should be directed to

study these translations and establish effective collaboration between publishing houses and academic circles to invest that effort in future editions. Style is no longer the core of the problem as it was; the quantity of translated works is beyond control. What lacks and is more urgent and significant than ever is to evaluate the quality of translations, refine them, and address their widespread circulation with no revising if they are free from weakness and errors. We also emphasize the necessity to reconsider literary translations into Arabic, as they convey an image of the

linguistic, literary, and stylistic capacities of this language. If the translation is good, it delivers a proper and positive image. But if it is poor, the reader of the translation might assume that the Arabic linguistic landscape is deteriorated and that our literature is below level. The truth, however, is that the Arabic language has brought to the world masterpieces of poetry and the miraculous divine Coran. It therefore deserves to be presented with honesty in its true and beautiful form.

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<sup>33</sup> - هوثورن، الصفحة 181.

<sup>34</sup> - Hawthorn, page 137.

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