

التلاقح الثقافي في الترجمة العربية – الانجليزية: الترجمة الثقافية للشهادة و  
الحداد في رواية وحدها شجرة الرمان لسنان انطون

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**Cultural encounters in Arabic-English translation: Cultural Translation of Martyrdom and Mourning in Sinan Antoon's The Corpse Washer**

**Cultural encounters in Arabic-English translation: Cultural Translation of Martyrdom and Mourning in Sinan Antoon's The Corpse Washer**

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**المستخلص**

تتناول هذه الورقة الترجمة الثقافية لمفهوم الشهادة و الحداد في رواية وحدها شجرة الرمان للكاتب سنان انطوان و تدرس رواية الحرب هذه التي ترجمها الكاتب نفسه الابعاد النفسية و الطقسية للفقدان في عراق ما بعد 2003 و يتم تناول العلامات الثقافية المعقدة بما في ذلك الشهيد و الطقوس الجنائزية و اللطميات باستعمال نموذج الترجمة الذاتية و بدمج نموذج بيرمان



(2000) للميول المشوهة للترجمة مع ما طرحه فينوتي و يعتمد الاطار التحليلي لدراسة المرجعيات الثقافية في النسخة المترجمة من الرواية و تناولت الدراسة أساليب إنطوان في تصوير التمثيلات الوجدانية و الدينية لطقوس الحداد و الحزن أو العلامات الثقافية المفردة في "التغريب" و تُظهر النتائج أن إنطوان يعتمد على إستراتيجية "التغريب المقيد" ، مستحضراً كثافة شعرية و مزعزعا راحة القارئ و إن الدور الثنائي لانطوان يسمح بدرجة نادرة من الانسجام بين صوت السرد و القصد الترجمي كما أن النتائج تحمل دلالات مهمة بالنسبة للترجمة الثقافية و السردية ما بعد الاستعمار و نظرية عالم النص و سياسات الحزن في التداول الادبي العالمي.

### Abstract

This paper examines the cultural translation of martyrdom and mourning in Sinan Antoon's novel *The Corpse Washer*. This self-translated Iraqi war novel explores the psychological and ritual aspects of loss in post-2003 Iraq. Complex cultural signifiers, including *shaheed* (martyr), *funerary rites*, *Latmiyat* are negotiated through the paradigm of self-translation. Integrated with Berman's (2000) deforming tendencies, Venuti's account is the analytical framework used to analyze the cultural references in the translated version of this novel. This paper analyzes Antoon's methods of depicting the affective and religious representations of mourning and grief rituals or overly exoticized signifiers. The findings show that Antoon employs a strategy of restrained foreignization, invoking poetic density, and disrupting reader comfort. Antoon's dual role allows for a rare cohesion between narrative voice and translational intent. The findings also have implications for cultural translation, postcolonial narrativity, text-world theory, and the politics of grief in global literary circulation.

### 1.Introduction

This study examines the impact of self-translation on some cultural issues related to Iraq as reflected in Sinan Antoon's novel *The Corpse Washer*. Iraq has undergone a series of devastating events, such as successive wars, sectarian violence, and occupation. These have had significant impacts on the Iraqi literature, especially Iraqi novels, by



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representing grief, commemorating the dead, and recording collective trauma. Not only do the martyr concept and the mourning rituals emerge as literary themes, but they have also been represented as cultural forms in Iraqi history. Thus, the problem lies in transmitting, to the target readership, the emotional, spiritual, and political realization of such issues that represent cultural expressions of loss in the Iraqi society. It is a question of representing martyrdom across cultural boundaries and rendering grief rituals without resorting to exoticization or semantic dilution. The cultural side is highly significant in literary translation (Newmark, 1988, pp. 184-6; Munday, 2001, pp. 126-43; Hatim & Munday, 2004, p. 24; Pym, 2010, p. 138;).

In this paper, Sinan Antoon's novel *Wahdaha Shajarat al-Rumman* (2010) and its English version (*The Corpse Washer*, 2013) have been selected to address the above question. The major plot of this novel revolves around the son of a traditional corpse washer, Jawad, whose career represents a microcosm of the sufferings of the post-2003 Iraqi community. This novel is saturated with funerary imagery, ritual lamentation, and intimate portrayals of death. This novel, *The Corpse Washer*, is self-translated by Antoon, who plays the dual role of both author and translator. Self-translation maintains full control over meaning, tone, and style because the author exactly knows the goals of the original text. In addition, the bilingual author can balance the cultural differences: It is a double identity from one perspective. Thus, it brings about issues of translator visibility, intentionality, and the ethics of cultural representation. These areas are viewed within the theories of cultural translation (Spivak, Bhabha), foreignization/domestication (Venuti), and Antoine Berman's notion of the "trial of the foreign." According to Spivak (1992) and Venuti (1995), translation cannot be neutral because it negotiates silences and preserves cultural opacity. Both what is speakable and unspeakable can be reflected in the process of translation.

One of the dominant translational strategies enacted by Antoon is restrained foreignization. This strategy encapsulates methods such as maintaining key Arabic terms, utilizing poetic imagery, and resisting cultural simplification. These are adopted to recreate the density of Iraqi grief in translation.

This paper is significant for debates in translation studies that explore the representation of loss and the impact of self-translation in the postcolonial era. Being self-translated, this novel testifies to the principles of text-world theory in that Antoon is fully aware of the mental representations of the source text and the target text. The text world of the Arabic fiction and its English version can be viewed as conceptual spaces "created specifically from developed textual information, and built up from knowledge that the reader perceives the author holds in common" (Gavins, 2007, pp. 2-3). The language of loss is a key theme of death in this novel, along with the complexities involved in conveying grief in the translated version. The major character, Jawad, is in front of the remains of the dead every day. Furthermore, it also implies the loss of cultural meaning in translation, involving deeply rooted terms in the Iraqi culture in particular. These involve lexical items such as *shaheed* and *latmiyya*. Such complex terms defy simple equivalents, reflecting the incapability of capturing trauma, which Caruth (1996) describes as the "belatedness" and fragmentation of traumatic testimony. This paper attempts to provide answers for the following research questions:

- 1. How are culturally loaded terms reflected in the self translation of The Corpse Washer?**
- 2. How does Antoon's dual role impact the representation of trauma and mourning characterizing the Iraqi culture?**
- 3. Literature Review**

In the Iraqi context, translation, cultural memory, and trauma are interwoven in Arabic literature, attracting growing scholarly attention in recent decades. What is not fully examined is the representation of mourning and martyrdom in self-translation. In this literature review, four important issues will be explored: (1) cultural translation and untranslatability, (2) the ethics and politics of self-translation, (3) representation of mourning and martyrdom in Iraqi literature, and (4) translation strategies in Arabic-English literary transmission.

## **2.1 Cultural Translation and the Question of Untranslatability**

In any translational effort of fiction across languages, issues or obstacles regarding cultural boundaries will arise. The problem of





untranslatability lies in the lack of direct equivalents across languages. Cultural translation, as theorized by scholars like Bhabha (1994) and Spivak (1992), signifies the asymmetrical power dynamics and ideological tensions that shape cross-cultural representation. As for Spivak, she opposes the idea of rendering the Other “readable” by opting for domestication. For example, elements related to rituals and beliefs are not always easily translatable. In “the trial of the foreign” notion, Berman (2000) advocates for maintaining the foreign element as part of the translators’ ethics. The translator has to preserve cultural strangeness, weaving that element into the target text. According to Venuti (1995), “foreignization” is considered a political and ethical stance, especially in the translation of postcolonial literary works.

## 2.2 Self-Translation and the Politics of Voice

This paper is about the self-translation of one of the Iraqi novels translated into English. Self-translation assumes a special place in translation studies. In this domain, the boundary between the author’s original intent and the act of translation is minimized, providing an insider perspective to reframe the third-party translators’ interpretive perspective. According to Grutman (2009), self-translators often navigate a balance between staying true to the source culture and making their work accessible to the target audience. In the directionality of the Arabic-English literary context, few studies have addressed self-translation, and even fewer have explored it in terms of cultural mourning. The integration of authorial authority and translational agency in Antoon’s *The Corpse Washer* allows for examining how grief, memory, and ritual are contextualized cross-culturally from an internal perspective.

Mankhi and Mohammed (2020) and Mhoodar (2021) studied Antoon’s *The Corpse Washer* as a trauma novel, focusing on the life-threatening loss experienced through the career of corpse washing. In another dimension, Jassim and Mohammed (2024) integrated the theme of trauma with the influence of the environment, exploring Antoon’s allegorical depiction of the protagonist as a rebellious character. Taking the same novel as a case study, Mahmoud (2016) focused on the concepts of war and violence as represented by Antoon. Using a qualitative literary analysis, Al-Moosawi (n.d.) examines Jawad’s experiences as a reluctant corpse washer and aspiring artist, recurring nightmares, Shiite funerary



rituals, and symbolic landscapes, aiming to show how Antoon adroitly uses magical realism to critique the demolition of Iraqi identity during the American occupation and resist Western-centric accounts of the 2003 War.

From the perspective of the conquered, Yebra (2021) examined the Iraqi traumatic effects of the lack of basic needs. Utilizing Peeren's notion of the living ghost, Badiou's notion of destituteness, and Butler's concepts of grief and nonviolence, Yebra narrated the actions through Jawad, who delivers a liminal stage discourse on his past reality that he is no longer enjoying. This has been represented by depicting Jawad as both a narrator and focalizer of his displacement case. As for the notion of the ghost, Peeren (2014) describes generational trauma as a "ghost in the room", a metaphorical reflection of an unacknowledged existence that impacts current dynamics.

### **2.3 Martyrdom and Mourning in Iraqi Literature**

Issues of *martyrdom* and *mourning* are key topics in the Iraqi culture and religious life. This is framed by the Shi'a rituals of Ashura in Karbala, and the politics of war and postcolonialism. Not only is martyrdom a theological or nationalistic figure, but it is also a deeply intimate and embodied experience (al-Musawi, 2006; Cook, 2007). Religious topics such as ritual lamentation (*latmiyyāt*), funerary gatherings (*majālis al-'azā'*), and poetic eulogies form the expressive landscape through which grief is articulated. In Antoon's novel *The Corpse Washer*, these rituals are recurrent and dominant in the narrative texture and aesthetic form. In this regard, Fakhreddine (2017) argues that contemporary Arabic literature often reflects mourning as a theme and a textual strategy. Negotiating cultural identity in the translation of Antoon's novel, Al-Omar (2018) refers to Antoon's balance between domestication and foreignization in rendering culturally loaded terms. On a par with this, Al-Sari (2025) refers to the manner by which the translator reshaped cultural elements in the English version in an attempt to realize a counterpart for Iraqi identity.

### **2.4 Arabic-English Literary Translation: Strategies and Dilemmas**

In the context of Arabic-English translation, translation is a domain of restructuring and reshaping literature through the application of translation strategies, including omission, explanation, and substitution,





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as highlighted by Said Faiq (2004), Baker(2006), and Hartman (2014) in their examination of Arabic literature. In the Iraqi novels, there are items like *shaheed* (martyr) that are culturally intriguing; therefore, they create translational problems in terms of preserving unfamiliar terminology and replacing it with potentially reduced equivalents, such as *victim* or *dead*. Considering translation as narrative reframing, Baker (2006) addresses issues in translation, such as representing trauma or conflict to a global readership. Self-translation is easier than the traditional paradigm in controlling subtle cultural meanings because the author-translator voice directly controls the conveyance of cultural meanings.

In domains like the above, especially in translating Iraqi novels, it is important for translators to consider the *skopos* of the text to be rendered. *Skopos* is of crucial significance when dealing with culturally sensitive domains. Jabir (2006) provides a critical reappraisal of *Skopos* Theory, highlighting the translational intentionality in encountering cultural gaps. He asserted that a translator is in a position to highlight communicative function in cases that demand preserving source-text ideology. Such adequate strategies become evident in Antoon's endeavor to preserve ritual and emotive intersection in his self-translating of *The Corpse Washer*. Contrasting Arabic with English, Jabir (2022) explores the syntactic and semantic asymmetries between Arabic and English within the framework of contrastive grammar. These discrepancies are crucial when translating culturally loaded terms such as *shaheed* or *latmiyya*, which lack direct equivalents in English. Antoon's intent to maintain certain Arabic terms testifies to some significant observation that cultural translation often entails selective lexical retention, interpretive approximation, or even narrative silence to highlight affective and ideological faithfulness.

This novel, *The Corpse Washer*, integrates cultural translation, mourning, and self-translation. It provides a fertile and underexplored area for negotiating linguistic and emotional boundaries. To sum up, this study is an attempt and a contribution to the intersection of translation ethics, postwar Iraqi representation, and the poetics of loss.



### 3. Methodology

In this study, the data under investigation is Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* (2013), a self-translated English version of his Arabic novel *Wahdaha Shajarat al-Rumman* (2010). The actions in this novel are presented through a first-person narration technique, narrated by Jawad, who works as a painter but later turns to being a corpse washer. He has intimate encounters with death, and rituals of grief offer an unflinching depiction of post-2003 Iraqi life. According to Antoon's translational self-reflexivity, he employed direct linguistic negotiations, integrating affect, cultural meaning, and literary voice. That is why the researcher selected this novel, *The Corpse Washer*, because the concepts of *martyrdom* and *mourning* represent such integrations. These are translated within the confines of self-translation.

As for methodology, a qualitative, text-oriented approach is employed in this study with special reference to selected passages. In these excerpts, the foregrounded themes include martyrdom, mourning rituals, religious allusions, and funerary. Special emphasis is placed on culturally embedded expressions such as *shaheed*, 'azā', and *latmiyya*. Moreover, there are some related themes, such as death, ritual practices, and bodily care. The analysis encapsulates both micro-level lexical choices and broader macro-level narrative effects. The theoretical frameworks are a triangulation, including Venuti's (1995) model of foreignization and domestication, Berman's (2000) "twelve deforming tendencies", and Bhabha's (1994) and Spivak's (1992) cultural translation theory. Furthermore, some paratextual references are utilized, such as Antoon's interviews, translator's notes, and critical commentary. The limits of translatability from an internal perspective are redefined through this integrated methodology.

### 4. Analysis

The Iraqi novelist, in *The Corpse Washer*, offers a vivid blended picture of personal and collective mourning, narrated by Jawad. He changed his job from an artist to a *ghassāl*, or a corpse washer. Jawad represents a microcosm of Iraq's mounting death toll. The power of the novel lies in its emotional and cultural details, reflected in the themes of martyrdom, death ritual, and corporeal deterioration. Not only are these





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elements narratively crucial, but they are also linguistically expressive through a lexicon of grief rooted in Islamic and Iraqi conventions and traditions. In the following excerpts, the researcher will examine the strategies Antoon employs in his self-translation capacity within various linguistic and cultural limitations.

### 4.1 Translating Martyrdom

One of the most recurrent terms in the Arabic source text is *shaheed* (martyr). In the Iraqi context, particularly in the aftermath of war and sectarian violence, the term carries religious, political, and emotional significance. Not only does it imply a victim of violence, but it is also made consecrated for sacred use by death, characterized by social and divine purpose. In the English version, Antoon maintains *martyr* in some instances but also substitutes it with neutral terms such as *dead* or *killed*. For example:

Arabic: «قالوا إن أخي صار شهيداً»

English: “They said my brother had become a martyr.”

In this excerpt, Antoon maintains the term by preserving its emotional and cultural atmosphere. Nonetheless, in other situations, the term “martyr” is not repeated; rather, a euphemistic description or silence is used. This strategy of manipulation is a carefully planned and adapted one, where the author/translator is in a position to trigger a sense of commitment to cultural semantics with the limitations of English conceptual frameworks. According to Venuti's paradigm, the translator resorts to the notion of foreignization through the occasional preservation of the term *martyr*. Thus, Antoon invited the Western readership into an unconventional logic of sacrifice by tipping the domesticated moral scales of Western readers. However, he sometimes resorts to adopting domestication to avoid alienating or confusing readers. That is to say, domestication is highlighted in special situations, where religious or sectarian affiliations may be politically sensitive.

Another example about Martyrdom, which reflects one of the pivotal moments when Jawad recalls:

Arabic: «قالوا إن أخي صار شهيداً. لكنه قُتل وهو يشتري الخبز»

English: “They said my brother had become a martyr. But he was killed while buying bread.”



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In this excerpt, a juxtaposition of the cultural valorization of martyrdom is achieved with a pedestrian circumstance, which is *buying bread*. This testifies to a kind of inconsistency between narrative and myth. The use of the word *martyr* represents an intentional act of foreignization, in Venuti's sense: he maintains the lexical weight of the Arabic term without translating it into any equivalent, such as *victim* or *casualty*. By this retention, Antoon maintains the complex ideological function of this Arabic term. Another subtle rendition emerges when Jawad reflects:

Arabic: «من ذا الذي يستحق أن يُسمّى شهيداً؟ وهل غسلتُ شهداء أم قتلتى؟»

English: "Who deserves to be called a martyr? Have I washed martyrs or simply the dead?"

According to Spivak, the translator here tries to maintain the rhetorical, cultural, and ethical weight of the source. In Venuti's terminology, domestication is avoided to dismiss alterity. In the Arabic text, the clause (من ذا الذي يستحق) reflects solemnity and evokes deep moral effect, but Antoon uses plain English. In Spivak's paradigm, the translator should make the English reader "feel the foreignness", perhaps by preserving *shaheed* with a glossing or a footnote.

According to Berman's (2000) twelve deforming tendencies, Antoon adopts rationalization and clarification. The former is set by using straightforward syntax as a counterpart for the Arabic powerful clause (من ذا الذي يستحق); while the latter is achieved by using "simply" in "*simply the dead*".

Another important point in the above excerpt is the juxtaposition of two Arabic plural nouns ("شهداء ... قتلتى"); both carry rhythm and weight. On the other hand, the English version does not conform to the Arabic text, losing some intensity and balance. Antoon uses the item (the dead), which is a general word and does not convey the same emotional force as the Arabic one. In Berman's paradigm, this is a loss of rhythm. According to the Cambridge dictionary, the word "slain" is used to describe someone or something killed violently. It is often used in literary contexts, such as describing "slain warriors" or the "slain dragon,". Thus, it is more suitable than the general word *the dead*. As an alternative, the





researcher suggests the following: “Who is it that deserves to be called a *shaheed*? Have I washed martyrs, or the slain?”

#### 4.2 Translating Ritual Mourning: The ‘*Azā*’ and the *Latmiyya*

One of the key themes in this novel is echoing Karbala through the narrative of grief, including the *majlis al-‘azā* (mourning gathering) and *latmiyyāt* (ritual chants of self-flagellation). These rituals are culturally and religiously dense, related to Shi‘a practices of commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Husayn at Karbala, but also reconfigured to honor contemporary Iraqi dead. Let’s examine the following example:

Arabic: «كانت النسوة يلطمن صدورهن وينشدن اللطمية»

English: “The women beat their chests and chanted the *latmiyya*.”

In this instance, Antoon adopts the strategy of foreignization by preserving the Iraqi Arabic term *latmiyya* without explanation. Thus, there is no footnote or glossing to explain what is meant by this term, leaving a space for the reader to arrive at the intended interpretation. In Berman’s terminology, this is described as resisting *clarification*, maintaining the strangeness of the ritual. In interviews, Antoon has noted his discomfort with reducing ritual mourning to “performance” or mere cultural spectacle. His translation strategy echoes this resistance. Furthermore, the translator selected the phrase *beat their chests* instead of *mourn* as a translation for “يلطمن”. This rendering evokes a sense of raw and tangible feeling that is both emotional and physical. It preserves both the performative and affective dimensions of grief—a core function of the ‘*azā*’ (condolence).

In this novel, intertextuality is also available; by intertextual history, it means "the temporally prior set of acts of meaning to which the given act of meaning makes allusion" (Halliday, 1992/ 2003, p. 361). In this novel, references or allusions to Karbala or Ashura are dominant. Mourning the death of her son, Amir, Jawad’s mother mentions:

Arabic: «قتلوا ابنك كما قُتل الحسين»

English: “They killed your son just as Husayn was killed.”

Antoon does not comment on this statement, giving space to his readers to grasp the intertextual dimension. In this comparison, Antoon lavishes a sense of contemporary martyrdom on a sacred historical incident,



bridging the space between collective memory and private grief. By adopting foreignization, Antoon signifies the symbolic weight of the source culture without providing explanatory interference. Another powerful instance occurs in the following excerpt:

Arabic: «كانت أم الشهيد تتدب ابنها بصوتٍ مبجوح، وتضرب على وجهها»

English: “The martyr’s mother was wailing hoarsely and slapping her face.”

Part of the culture of Iraqi women is slapping their faces when they see their sons killed. This is faithfully reflected in the above excerpt. No euphemism is adopted, nor is there a deletion for the self-harming gestures. The phrase “slapping her face” is a representation of the rawness of Iraqi ritual mourning, reflected as it is without filtering. In Berman’s terms, Antoon avoids the “effacement of the body” that often accompanies translations of pain from Arabic into English.

#### 4.3 Translating the Body in Mourning

A dominant theme in this novel is the corpse, a motif which is pictured as bloodied, decomposed, sacred, and profaned. The concept of *ghusl*, which is the ritual washing of the dead, is a representative narrative and a metaphoric expression. It functions as a form of subtle opposition against the brutal war apparatus, a dehumanizing machinery.

Arabic: «غسلت الجثة، وكانت يداه مضمومتين كما لو كانا يصليان»

English: “I washed the corpse. His hands were clasped as if he were praying.”

In this excerpt, there is evidence for Antoon’s sensitivity to religious symbolism and corporeal reverence. Avoiding giving a literal equivalence for (كما لو كانا يصليان), Antoon employs a poetic equivalence that maintains dignity. Not resorting to foreignization, Antoon preserved the imagery by reflecting Islamic overtones. This aligns with Berman’s ideal of “respecting the original’s rhythm and symbolism,” even when the precise terminology is sacrificed.

The theme of the physicality of death, including bodies of children, decomposed corpses, and ceremonial washings, dominates this novel. For example, in one of the scenes, a description of a corpse was given by Jawad as:



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Arabic: «لم يبقَ من وجهه سوى نصف خد وفتحة الفم التي كانت تبتسم»

English: “Only half his cheek remained, and the mouth—a hole that seemed to be smiling.”

The representation of this situation has been translated carefully by Antoon. The phrase “a hole that seemed to be smiling” evokes moments of distortion and melancholic emotions. In his renderings, Antoon avoids over-explaining or sanitizing, instead portraying the same uncanny discourse world of the Arabic text, hinting at both horror and involuntary affection. Moreover, the process of *ghusl* (ritual washing) goes as follows:

Arabic: «سكبْتُ الماء المخلوط بالكافور على جسده، ومررتُ القماش على وجهه برفق»

English: “I poured camphor-scented water over his body and gently passed the cloth over his face.”

In this excerpt, the text world encapsulates some sensory elements, e.g., *camphor-scented*, *gently*, and *passed the cloth*. Such elements construct mental representations of a ritualistic atmosphere. Here, Antoon avoids the literal religious diction of *ghusl*, but still, he successfully conveys the feeling evoked by the act. That is to say, the material and spiritual weight of the corpse is maintained in both texts. According to Spivak, the text world of translation can either remove or keep the subaltern's agency. In this excerpt, the first-person narration is maintained, which is positive in terms of respecting subjectivity.

### 4.4 Silences and Omissions

One of the basic techniques used by Antoon is strategic omissions in his English translation. For example, certain cultural or religious allusions or references are sometimes mentioned and sometimes absent. When a given cultural reference is omitted, it does not always signal loss; omission is intentionally used to reflect the author's intent. Linguistically, the translator aims to produce a given *boulogomaic* function. Spivak (1992) urges translators to resist “intellectual colonialism”, i.e., avoiding over-explaining the Other. Antoon's silences, therefore, may be viewed as acts of refusal, maintaining the idiosyncrasy of Iraqi grief rather than rendering it entirely legible. In some passages, Antoon omits Islamic formulas (e.g., *inna lillah wa-inna ilayhi rāji'ūn*) or Quranic allusions, opting instead for ellipsis. These cannot be seen as translational



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inadequacies but conscious silences that characterize issues Spivak (1992) terms as the “sacred opacity” of the Other. In one scene, Jawad walks through a devastated cemetery:

Arabic: «كأنني أمشي في فهرس موتى بلا ترتيب»

English: “It felt like I was walking through an unindexed archive of the dead.”

In this rendering, Antoon lavishes metaphorical flavor by using (“unindexed archive”), extending the Arabic word (فهرس) (index) into a larger postmodern conceit. Fidelity is scaffolded through an emotional and philosophical correspondence.

According to Berman (2000), deleting some chunks can be a powerful tool for portraying the same rhythm and atmosphere. Antoon’s decision-making act reveals a clear translational purpose of maintaining cultural integrity rather than domestication. This strategy indirectly calls for adopting the key tenets of Skopos Theory (for more details, see Jabir, 2006).

### 5. Results and Discussion

Being self-translated, *The Corpse Washer* provides a unique example of cultural translation viewed from within. In this self-translation account, this novel combines two worlds: linguistic and cultural, without diluting the emotional depth of Iraqi mourning rituals nor fully adapting them to conform to the target readership. The previous analysis shows a conscious balancing act between fidelity and adaptation, a strategy best understood and viewed as restrained foreignization. This method scaffolds Antoon to convey the cultural uniqueness of martyrdom and mourning while still making the text world accessible to a worldwide audience. The main results obtained from the above analysis are summarized in the following two tables:

**Table 1: Translation Strategy Balance**

Strategy	Function	Percentage
Foreignization	Retention of cultural elements	50%
Domestication	Adaptation for readability	30%
Poetic or sensory cues	Aiding understanding	20%



**Table 2: Ethical Translation Choices**

Aspect	Strategy	Example
Cultural specificity	Retention/ Foreignization	Shaheed, latmiyya, ghusl
Emotional resonance	Poetic/sensory cues	Ritualwashing scene imagery
Accessibility for readers	Adaptation/ selective explanation	Avoid theological jargon to maintain narrative flow
Ethical stance	Respect the irreducibility of the foreign	Readers experience interpretive discomfort intentionally

Out of the above tables, it becomes clear that Antoon favors employing foreignization. For instance, the culturally embedded terms such as *shaheed*, *latmiyya*, and *ghusl* are translated in a way to preserve a translation ethos aligned with Venuti's (1995) strategy of foreignization as an ethical position. Not using footnotes or explanations places the reader in a position of interpretive inconvenience; this is an intentional move reducing the foreign. Generally, translation is considered a clarification act, but Antoon opposes these norms and resists the impulse to universalize Iraqi suffering.

One of the distinguishing features in Antoon's translations is the amalgamation of unfamiliar terms with poetic or sensory cues. These include visual imagery, bodily detail, and metaphor, bringing out emotional correspondence even without evoking a cultural context. This strategy is similar to Berman's emphasis on *constructive translation* in which a translator intentionally preserves opaqueness, but narrative rhythm or coherence is still there. For example, in the ritual washing scene, the translation act maintains its symbolic fidelity though he avoids the Arabic theological jargon. By doing so, this piece of translation provides a culturally grounded target text. As for (in)correspondence across Arabic and English, in his book "*Significance of Contrastive Grammar in Translating Across Arabic and English*" (2022), Jabir refers



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to the syntactic and lexical non-correspondences across Arabic and English from a systemic functional perspective. The topics of this book are highly recommended for a literary translational attempts; in this case study they are of use for explaining Antoon's treatment of Arabic ritual terms or metaphoric constructions that lack direct grammatical or semantic equivalences.

The notions of martyrdom and mourning are haunting in the Iraqi society, aggravated by the Iraqi political violence, religious expression, and collective memory. In the binary opposition of martyr versus victim, or ritual versus superstition, Antoon develops a narrative space that reflects the complexity of Iraqi grief, highlighting the cultural functions in the Arabic text. In *Skopos Theory: Basic Principles and Deficiencies*, Jabir (2006) critically examines such notions related to the purpose and functions of translation. Balancing cultural authenticity with readability is one of the privileges of Antoon's translation, reflecting the emphasis of Skopos Theory on maintaining the translator's purpose.

Functionally, in some instances, Antoon omits the religious elaboration. This can be viewed as a rejection or a refusal of some act, i.e., not necessarily a loss in translation. Such moments are called Antoon's translational silences. Such a strategy of omission reduces the epistemic violence of overexposure or excessive explanation. This conforms to Spivak (1992) argument, which does not necessitate making everything "readable" in dominant cultural terms. This method of omission highlights the interiority of grief.

### 6. Conclusion

In this study, the researcher has examined the intricacies of self translation as reflected Sinan Antoon's *The Corpse Washer*. This study explores the cultural translation of martyrdom and mourning from Arabic into English. Certain key lexical and narrative choices, e.g. the treatment of shaheed, 'azā', latmiyya, and the ritualized care of the dead, have been demonstrated by Antoon, developing a strategy of restrained foreignization. That is to say, Antoon highlights the emotional and spiritual density of Iraqi mourning practices.

From a conscious ethical point of view, Antoon skillfully preserves the dignity of the cultural and religious expressions weaved in his





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narrative; he also reframes the Iraqi people trauma and resistance. These have been transmitted globally. In a context of war literature, the analysis, through the lens of self-translation, operates not simply as linguistic transfer but as an act of cultural testimony. In instances of silences and omissions, Antoon manipulates these strategies as implications of refusal, scaffolding the sanctity of grief against interpretive miscalculation.

As for the significance of this study, its results pertain to translation studies by highlighting the untapped potential of self-translation in identifying culturally embedded trauma. This study reveals some guidelines for the ethical demands of translating sacred or emotional material, where the translator tries to preserve affective and ideological integrity.

For further research studies, one could extend this project by focusing on reader reception of *The Corpse Washer* across linguistic and cultural contexts. Another proposed line can compare Antoon's self-translation with translations of other Iraqi authors by external translators. What matters is that cultural translation is not neutral: it evokes an act of remembering, resisting, and re-making meaning.

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