

Translating National Identity in a Changing Arab World

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In this paper, I will examine the complex nature of the relationship between translation and identity in a transforming Arab region. More specifically, I am interested in how translations of American entertainment television and movies are aiming – consciously or unconsciously – to homogenize the Arab cultural environment by muting certain elements deemed “non-Arab” – or perhaps simply “too liberal” – within the original programming, and substituting idioms more in line with the conservative mores of Arab media company owners and financial backers, as well as promoting and perpetuating the allegedly dominant norms within the Middle East. Thus the paper considers translation within the realm of the political, focusing upon the agency of translators and institutional translation companies, on censorship, and more generally on translation policies in the region. The paper’s focus is informed by a recognition that the intellectual history of the Arab world cannot be understood in isolation from the socio-political, cultural and economic processes that have shaped it, both local and international.

More specifically, this paper asks the following questions: Can translators negotiate so-called cultural differences and play a role in a multi-layered Arab context without erasing a broad range of complex historical struggles between liberals and conservatives in the Arab region? Is media translation “domesticating” the text in a way that conforms to the majority’s belief-systems, or is it asserting one form of belief over others, promoting one particular sub-culture at the expense of a broad range of sub-cultures? Has translation become another tool of conversion and political statement even when the source material is a liberal text? Indeed, is it a prescriptive project in its own right?

The main argument presented here is that a specific set of rules is applied when translating television programs, one that is essentially homogenizing to – or assuming the homogeneity of – an Arab cultural environment that once addressed issues more freely and openly. In order to demonstrate this argument, I analyzed the translation of foreign, and more specifically American, movies and television series in the Arab World. I have examined

over the course of fifteen months – spanning from February 2010 to May 2011 – the translation of dozens of educational programs, series, and movies that aired on eight of the most watched TV channels.¹ It became clear that certain topics and words were not translated with precision, or were not translated at all. These consisted mainly of those with liberal connotations, atheist allusions or those that denied the existence of God, were drug or alcohol related, or that made sexual references or expressed sexual preferences. Such topics and words were substituted, muted, or dismissed within the translations (specific examples will be given hereinafter).

Translation tactics are intrinsically linked to the 1990s shift of the economic and information centers of power away from Egypt and the Levant and towards the more conservative Gulf region (Kraidy 2007). This shift has had an impact on the wider Arab society and culture since it is creating a new socio-cultural environment – one dominated by actors who are in general more conservative, religious, and culturally homogeneous than their predecessors, and who command multi-billion dollar media empires and some hundreds of media channels to propagate their views. Accordingly, the recent history of the Arab World cannot be understood in isolation from the rise of this multi-billion dollar media industry that is contributing to the sidelining of the ideological diversity of the previously dominant intellectual elite in the region – mainly progressive leftists and Arab liberals – in favor of the more conservative and religiously conformist business class of the Gulf.

Brief Historical Background: the Rise of the Conservative Gulf

The main argument of this section is that translations undertaken when Egypt and the Levant were effectively the centers of intellectual production in the region (from the mid-twentieth century until the early 1990s, at which point the Arab World witnessed the rise of Gulf-funded media empires that have since captured the Arab viewer and reader) were apolitical translations, more concerned with maintaining the original connotations and implications of the text under translation than with advancing a certain political or cultural agenda; these translations tackled myriad topics and issues. Accordingly, the shift towards the Gulf has created a new environment for the Arab intellectual overall, which has in turn had larger implications for the wider society that is influenced by those intellectuals.

A look at the history of translation from the mid-twentieth century to the present day underlines the long-standing central place of Egypt and Syria as the main translators in the Arab World, particularly due to Egypt's Alf Kitab project and its successors, as well as to the impressive Syrian Ministry of Culture project² (1960 – present). Translations of literature from these countries tend to have a humanistic and liberal developmentalist agenda, and importantly, have been “relatively free from political pressures” (Jacquemond 24-25). Jacquemond writes,

What strikes the researcher who goes through the titles published as part of these two programmes is the presence of numerous translations of classic

works of (mainly) Western literature and thought, without distinction of period, original language or ideological trend, manuals and essays pertaining to the social sciences in a broad sense, chosen in a very eclectic way and covering the whole spectrum (from 'left' to 'right', so to speak), alongside a militant, Marxist and third-worldist literature characteristic of the 1960s and 1970s. This eclecticism is an eloquent demonstration of how intellectuals trained in the liberal, colonial age (between the two World Wars) rallied to the cultural project of the new states, whether Nasserist or Baathist. It also demonstrates the eclectic nature of these states' cultural projects themselves and their genuine openness towards world culture. (Jacquemond 25)

This description of translation policy as humanist, developmentalist and (relatively) a-political³ has been supported by an examination of literary translations - of the French, English, Russian and American Classics - which reveals that translators were in general "faithful" to the original texts, even when they contained references to concepts that were considered foreign to the overall socially conservative Arab/Middle Eastern cultures (Jacquemond 2009). As such, the translations were in the main not commercially driven or politically influenced. This was also the case within the televised media in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Egypt, at least in terms of the limited number of series that were broadcast on public TV stations, and which covered a wide spectrum of topics. This televised media's "free" orientation was a result of the overall media community in the Arab region being led by humanist liberals (socially speaking), many of whom were based in the Levant and Egypt. Indeed, the private and governmental organizations that undertook most translation work were relatively loyal to the spirit, style and tone of topics as depicted in the source material, regardless of whether it was liberal or conservative, religious or atheist. Thus overall, they did not act as a censoring body, or at least did not do so in a systematic manner.

The last 20 or so years have witnessed a new phenomenon in the Arab World: the rise of commercially-driven media empires, with many satellite channels (such as Fox, Dubai One and MBC 2) dedicated to showing American television programs and movies. These satellite channels are commercially driven and cater to a new audience, namely the wealthier and more conservative audience of the Gulf region. This has induced them to show the international and American programs that will tend to draw large audiences and garner more advertising revenue, despite the fact that these programs are considered by the decision-makers within the media outlets as challenging the more socially conservative Islamic and Arab values that tend to predominate in the region. To address this conundrum, the media outlets appear to have resorted to a number of strategies that allow them to continue showing the programs while simultaneously accommodating the more conservative social mores within the region. These include censorship, for instance excising certain scenes (such as those that have kissing or nudity) and muting certain words or entire sentences, but more importantly for this paper, they have also used intermediation (translation mediation). As these media outlets exploded in terms of viewership, there has also been a significant rise in the need for media translations (since they are disseminating

more content), translations that ultimately reach very large numbers of people. The entanglement of political ideology with translation has thus been even more widely disseminated, with its impacts upon the public being potentially much greater.⁴

Translation Intermediation

This phenomenal media growth from the Gulf seems to have prompted translation policies to take a new direction, one that has not yet been addressed or studied in the academic literature. This new direction pushes translators to act as non-straightforward social and ideological censors.⁵ Though it is difficult to pinpoint with absolute certainty all the reasons for their new assumed role, it seems clear that it is linked to the emergence of different centers of economic power in the Arab region, with the conservative Gulf increasingly eclipsing the more ideologically diverse Levant and Egypt. The broadcasters of American television programs are now free, public Arab satellite channels that were launched and/or are funded and sponsored by both governmental and private capital from the Gulf States (not necessarily Gulf nationals, but Arabs whose primary concern is catering to the Gulf region, or whose own wealth has come from the Gulf). These new private and governmental media owners are in the main more conservative in their ideological outlooks as a result of time spent in the Gulf and primarily cater to societies that are relatively less diverse in terms of ideology, sectarian identity, ethnicity and religion.⁶ Indeed, the Gulf region is overall more conservative and culturally homogeneous than the rest of the Middle East. A look at the United Arab Emirates' prohibited content categories on the Internet illustrates this. For instance, prohibited content categories include so-called Top Level Domains (TLD). As stated by the UAE government:

This category includes Internet Content under a Top Level Domain name which offends against, is objectionable to, or is contrary to the public interest, public morality, public order, public and national security, Islam[ic]⁷ morality or is otherwise prohibited by any applicable UAE law, regulation, procedure, order or requirement.⁸

In legitimizing the illiberal intervention in the media, terms such as *al-hawiya* (identity), *thawabet al-mujtama'* (the fixed traditions of society) and *al-raka'iz* (the bases)⁹ are frequently cited.¹⁰ Concomitantly, policy-makers within the Gulf region – not to mention the owners/managers of these satellite channels – seem relatively less well versed in, and less welcoming of, liberal and leftist scholarship (whether Arab or foreign) than their counterparts elsewhere in the Arab world. Alternatively, one could argue that it is the translators themselves who are responsible since they have their own biases, conservative convictions, and spins when it comes to the text. But this would fail to explain why the translation is more literal and indeed liberal on private channels than on the free channels.¹¹ Another explanation could be that the censorship within the translations is due to the fact that these free Arabic channels that show North American and foreign movies/television series are commercially driven. They thus should not be seen as intellectual or cultural sites,

but rather as simply moneymaking ventures that are trying to reflect the cultural sensitivities that they ascribe to a majority of the viewing public.

While these elements are likely all at play, what is clear is the result: the satellite channels are continuing to buy and show popular American programs, and are simultaneously wary of exposing their spectators to certain concepts (many of which – as will be shown below – happen to be increasingly prevalent within the American programs). In this sense, translation has become a strategic ideological tool, one that is hidden in plain sight, wielded by the state, media owners and translation companies. These translations are not ethnocentric – indeed far from it, since the entirety of the Arab World is far from being culturally and ideologically monolithic in terms of its social values. But channels are acting on the assumption that there is a widespread and pervasive conservative culture that should be upheld in the Arab World.

Specific and straightforward, non-metaphorical examples of this “political translation” phenomenon I collected include the following¹²:

- 1) Inexact and vulgarized translations that skip a number of scientific words or involve extensive omissions. For instance, more specialized jargon that translators think the viewer would not understand is replaced by more accessible concepts. To take one example, the word “ego,” which should be translated as “*al-Ana*,” is often replaced by the word for “arrogance,” or “*ghurur*,” in Arabic. Moreover, feminist expressions such as “glass ceiling” are often ignored. The technical jargon is thus turned into a non-specialized word by utilizing a word from a more common vocabulary. In most cases, there is no need for the substitute word or the approximate translation since the exact word does exist in Arabic. The translation in this sense does not allow for a dynamic language and expansive translation (Dib 38 on Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in Arabic).
- 2) Norm-laden and implicative ideological translations. For example, when the idea of God is challenged, the word “God” is translated as “*Qadar*” (fate), or “*al-Sama*” (the sky). When God is personified, such as in the question “am I God?” the word “God” is translated as “superhero” or “hero” according to the context. Interestingly, some translators have even made a distinction between the Muslim God and the Christian God, referring to *Allah* when Muslims are speaking of God and *al-Rab* when Christians are doing so. Whether this is done consciously, or simply because some translators are not aware that the word “Allah” is also used by the Christian segment of Arab society and indeed that many Arab Muslims use the word *al-Rab* to refer to God, is uncertain. But one thing is clear: the distinction contributes to the creation of yet another binary opposition in a region struggling to define its own democratic systems and unified, cohesive national identities.

Another norm-laden and ideological translation is of the adjectives “gay,” “homosexual” and “lesbian.” These words are often translated as “*munharij*” or “*shadh*” (deviant), and sometimes as “*ghareeb al-atwar*” (strange), instead of “*mithli naw’i*”¹³ or “*mithli jinsiyan*” (homosexual). In the case of “lesbian,” the word is sometimes interpreted as “tomboy.” This is not a supplantive sort of translation, since the referential integrity of the source text is compromised (for an idea of what constitutes a supplantive sort of translation, see Darwish 149-150). Rather, it changes the basic meaning of the sentence and fails to maintain the descriptive but neutral intention of the source (when it comes to the word gay for instance). That is, there is no negative connotation to the word in the source text, but the words chosen in Arabic have negative associations. This “conventional equivalent” both contributes to and reinforces a conservative epistemic reality. Effectively, therefore, the translation distorts the intentions of the source text and reframes the original message. In some cases the framing is in fact nonsensical, since it is at odds with the overall tone and logical sequence of events within the program.

- 3) Pseudo-translation or concealed translation. This applies to the censorship of sexual language, sexual details and any perceived linguistic obscenity from the translation, despite the explicit sexuality (of which certain scenes are often cut) and alternative lifestyles that are discussed in certain movies. The logic of the channels seems to be the following: it is acceptable in the Arab World to see some sort of intimacy or the complex relations related to love outside of marriage and dating – including sexuality – depicted, but it is not permissible to develop the language for it. So, for instance, “sexual relation” is translated as “*alaqa hamima*” (intimate relationship) in an attempt to culturally detach the original meaning of the text from the scene presented.
- 4) Translation with extensive omissions: when drinking is discussed in a positive way, such as mentioning the benefits of drinking one glass of wine per day or the relaxing effects of alcohol, the passage is sometimes cut entirely from the program (for instance on the program “Doctors”); or when this proves impossible, words such as “alcohol” or “pot” (marijuana) are often simply not translated or are replaced by other words that would fit within the idealized world of a conservative Arab Muslim (or Arab Christian, for that matter). Although no effort has yet been made to elaborate a theory of this seminal dynamic in the region’s translation policies and habits, it is clear that when it comes to the media, the last twenty years have witnessed a conservative trend toward suppressing any word or expression that might challenge the conservative mores of a segment of the public.
- 5) Some omissions of political references to ethnic and religious minorities, and sometimes even to Christians – for example, in certain instances “church” is translated as *ma’bad* (temple) rather than “*kanissa*” (church). In such cases, it is most probably the result of a decision by the translator based on his or her own

inclinations and background; perhaps a wish to negate the other in the Arab region, as well as a need to make a judgment about what the audience is willing to hear/read.

Aside from the first point (about inexact and vulgarized translations), these changes made to the source material cannot be explained by reference to the “fidelity”/“freedom” dichotomy. One conclusion clearly emerges: when it comes to public television, translation has in the last few years both overtly and less conspicuously accommodated political and ideological agendas that aim to uphold dominant cultural connotations that are generally illiberal. It is tacitly influencing the formation and shaping of Arab culture by acting as yet another player in the civilizational jousting between Arab conservatives and Arab liberals.

These changes made to the source material are also not allowing the spectators to express their approval/disapproval or to evaluate what is being done, particularly as many of them do not speak English and are thus not aware of the tweaking visited upon the original text. The public watching these movies is not exposed to some of the ideological entanglements and discourses presented in the original material, though not as a result of direct intervention (due to a simple lack of access), but rather indirectly due to the translation of the material. This is even more significant given that television viewers in the Arab world generally make the normative assumption that the goal of a particular translation – whether of literature or in the media – is simply to transmit the original message of the text (including its spirit and style) within the limits imposed by linguistic constraints and other, similar translating tradeoffs.¹⁴

The Effects of Translation on National Identity

It is important to underline that the target *perceived* culture, rather than the actual target culture, is the one translators of free satellite channels have been catering to. They have thus been both conforming to the mass public’s domestic values (at least in the Gulf region) and simultaneously shaping the mass public’s domestic values (in the wider Middle East). The result is a slightly different product with slightly different connotations, though one that has significant implications for the Arab identity.

A number of observers have argued that the Arabic satellite channels have accelerated the process of social, cultural and political change. Indeed, if the broadcast television programs have an impact on behavior (Bell 1991, Rugh 2004), then translation mediation within these also has an impact on the social reality (Toury 1995; Venuti 1998; Baker 2007; Darwish 2009). But if language encodes information in a way that non-linguistic modalities cannot express (Zlateva 1993), then the implicit ideology of media translations has explicit implications that are not necessarily about *change*. Ultimately, these translations, whether driven by the translator’s background and outlook or an editorial policy, can end up reproducing dominant ideological and linguistic positions within the

socio-political realm at the expense of more subversive ones. In other words, intermediation (translation mediation) within the media can bypass the message found within the source material. In so doing, it impacts the awareness of the diverse audience of the Arab world, and perhaps more importantly the way youth (who tend to watch more TV and are more ideologically malleable) perceive their national identity and culture.¹⁵ This is because the audience's multi-faceted encounter with liberal expression is limited, reframed and reproduced by the mediating translator.¹⁶ The result is that the translator ends up playing the role of "cultural police" by limiting access to certain belief-sets, norms and metaphors while perpetuating others. Thus while the mass media can cause change (Rugh 2004) and offer opportunities for dialogue, this change must actively be regulated and framed, and thus censored. Indeed, as much as the media allows for greater openness, it can also "provide a way for religious and political leaders to assert their authority and reasonableness to both followers and the curious" (Eickelman and Piscatori xi).

The official reason why translators tinker with the source material is in order to massage it for domestic consumption; they alter its framework to mitigate the impact of certain "foreign" ideas. This is done in the name of "cultural difference," to protect "cultural identity."¹⁷ Translation is thus not only used to reinforce entrenched views while limiting access to dissenting or more nuanced ones, but it is also used to contribute to defining the Arab self relative to the foreigner.¹⁸

One main problem is that many of the ideas that are restricted are not considered "foreign" by everyone in the Arab World. Most concepts, whether related to alcohol, sexuality or religiosity, have been discussed, examined and written about in the Arab World by liberal intellectuals for years, beginning as early as the latter part of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ The translation is thus not restricting access to certain "foreign" ideas, but is instead restricting access to liberal ideas that can be considered Arab as well. In this sense, the translation side-steps the range of ideological positions present within the Arab World, and perpetuates certain entrenched forms of a community at the expense of dissident "communities of belief," what Timothy Brennan calls the "politics of being" (Brennan 2006). To put it simply: translation is ideologically-driven, not culturally-driven.

Conservative and cultural changes to otherwise socially liberal and multi-layered source material has meant that a potentially significant gap or perhaps mix is being created within the Arab audience, whose own intelligentsia has traditionally tended to be socially progressive (as distinct from being Westernized). More particularly, young viewers and the potential revolutionary youth who follow the international as well as the Arab media are not being exposed to some of the main concepts that are central to understandings of human rights, feminism, universalism and global justice when watching television. Interestingly, scriptwriters of Arabic programs have been more able to give voice to their liberal humanist ideological inclinations. In particular, they have been more successful at tackling issues of sexuality and human rights from a universalist perspective than have foreign series, which take on the same issues but tend subsequently to be censored by translators.²⁰ The

scriptwriters of Arabic programs are able to do so because they can bypass the translation censorship machine.

The Universalist Nation

Ultimately, as much as it might seem to offer access to the “other” as depicted by the North American world of visual entertainment, translation in the wake of the rise to dominance of the Gulf media channels has in fact not done so. This is because it is formatted in a way to promote and perpetuate certain assumptions within the Arab world. For a majority of Arabs who do not speak English, or at least not well enough to follow every word and nuance, translation is yet another variable used by conservatives in order to shape the way society sees itself -- reinforced by a mis-translation of the other. We can make several inferences about the assumptions that characterize the translation framework within this media:

- Arab Society does not question the existence of God, but also and more importantly, no society questions the existence and the idea of God.
- Arab society is entirely Muslim.
- There is a cultural separation between Arab Muslims and Arab Christians, as if they represented different and separate cultural units within the region. In taking this position, translation also helps to propagate a non-ecumenical understanding of the region’s two dominant faiths.
- Gays are “deviant,” whether in Arab society or elsewhere, since the word used in translation has the connotation of moral deviance, even when the source material is using the word neutrally or favorably. This is despite the recent movement by the Arab (liberal) intelligentsia away from such moral postulations/inferences.

Important implications also arise from translation’s politicization. In particular, Arabic-speakers in the region have no access through the media to the new vocabulary that is being developed by experts within the Arab World. There is thus less of a *’alaqa tafa’uliyya* (interactive relationship) between the public masses and experts. Perhaps more fundamentally, translation policies at these channels are helping to portray and define Arab society as uni-ideological. They are thus failing to recognize that the region is composed of many sub-cultures and belief-systems. Taken together, the net effect of these translations is to reflect one social context and one moment out of many, but also to homogenize an otherwise multi-vocal society, curb the horizon of options, and marginalize other, less conservative societal currents and ideologies. Their impact is even more significant now that normative translations are presented on the small screen at home for both children and adult viewers. Hidden as they are in plain view, the translations and their effects are crucial to delineate, particularly in a region that is struggling to define its own democratic systems and national identities in a time of turbulent change. Surprisingly, and perhaps even counter-intuitively (given that the programs discussed here are often relatively progressive), conservative ideologues and leaders now have even more of a chance to impact the social

fabric of the Arab region, in this case through translations that simplify the ideological complexity of the Arab world. Will this lead to an increasingly conservative pan-Arab identity within an apparently globalized framework?

Some posit that there is an urgent need to return to the question of the ethics of translation in a globalized world order that is infused with an Anglo-American cultural and linguistic hegemony in order to avoid ethnocentric interpretations of the text at hand. Selim asks, “how have translators in ‘other’ cultures, and the various regimes that support or disown them, negotiated the question of difference in a historical context where difference...was and continues to be wielded as a disciplinary arm in the form of imperialism and development discourses and marketed as a universal object of desire under the title of ‘civilization’?” (Selim 2).

Following from an aspect of Selim’s question, this paper asks how translators can negotiate so-called cultural differences and play a role in a multi-layered Arab context without erasing a broad range of complex historical struggles between liberals and conservatives in the Arab region. How has translation become a prescriptive project in its own right and another tool of political statement?

In addressing these questions, I argue that translation tactics should be investigated as part of the shift of the economic center of power towards the more conservative Gulf region (regardless of whether they are a product of channel policies or translator’s preferences). That is, as explained in this paper, they cannot be seen in isolation from the rise, in the 1990s, of the multi-billion dollar media industry that has effectively sidelined progressive leftists and Arab liberals. Accordingly, it is not the “otherness of the other” (Bermann 5) that ought to be discussed, but rather how monolithic the (Arab) self is, and how “other” the (non-Arab) other is. At the same time, it is important to consider to what degree the otherness – or non-otherness – of the self is itself a mirror of the otherness of a non-monolithic self? In other words, what is claimed to be an otherness is not necessarily one, but an attempt to deny the existence of the other within one’s own culture. Once that is established, the question as to whether translation of the otherness should be domesticated or made more nuanced becomes moot. After all, one can claim that it is impossible to make the Arabs ideologically and culturally monolithic, and thus that the mere conceptualization of “us” vs. the “other” is both very difficult and highly problematic. One final point made by Selim deserves re-iterating here:

In the Middle East, students and scholars are often deprived of effective participation in the debates surrounding dominant trends in Western literary theory as well as new developments in the various fields of Near Eastern literature, due to lack of material access to texts and international circuits of scholarly exchange. Moreover, in both cases, narrowly circumscribed notions of national literature and the hermeneutic traditions they engender have tended to structure the analytic tools and intellectual paradigms through

which literary texts and literary histories are studied and deployed in both the institutional and the discursive sense. (Selim 2)

Conclusion

This paper has examined the intersection of translation, culture, identity and free satellite channels in the Arab World. Given the number of North American and foreign movies that have infiltrated the Arab media and thus the region's cultural environment in the last twenty years or so, translation has become a multi-layered and multi-modal site for constructing and contesting different versions of regional, national and personal identity. And because the Gulf's viewers and channel funders are so powerful, translation has become a much more conservative endeavor overall.

This paper has argued that translators, as a result of the way they negotiate so-called cultural differences, end up erasing a broad range of complex historical struggles between liberals and conservatives in the Arab region. Furthermore, they assert one form of belief over others and promote one particular sub-culture at the expense of a broad range of alternative sub-cultures through their "domestication" of the text in a way that conforms to the majority's belief-systems. The additional problem with this sort of mediating role between the source material and the domestic culture is that there is as of yet no public discourse on translation, and no public debate on whether translation companies should be allowed to mediate discourses from other languages. Similarly, there is no discussion of the political contexts and ideological biases of translations when it comes to television and movies.

It is important to underline here that it would be problematic to center the debate on translation in terms of *culture*, since it is difficult to claim that programs such as "Will and Grace" (to take just one example) are representative of the West, let alone of the American public overall. This paper thus posits that the problem is of an ideological nature. There is consequently a need to update translation theories and studies in the Arab World, or at the very least to engender debate on the matter amongst a public that at present believes that translation of movies and television series is fully faithful to the source material.

Notes

¹ Free channels are channels available to the public without a monthly or yearly subscription, whereas private channels require a subscription.

² "The Syrian translation program is poorly known outside Syria and Lebanon, mainly because of the very bad distribution of its publications. Nonetheless, in terms of its duration and the number of titles published, it is the most important in the Arab World" (Jacquemond 25).

³ For more on the discourse on translation in the Arab World, see Jacquemond (2009).

⁴ For works on ideology and translation, see Simms (1997) and Timoczko (2003).

⁵ Paul Roberts explains that social censure “operates to divide phenomena into the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’, to segregate and separate..., to denounce and regulate (the outlawed from the legal), to mark out (the demonic from the holy)...censuring is thus a profoundly moral-political activity...” (Roberts 171)

⁶ Although ultimately it is impossible to tell whether the censorship is a result of self-censorship by the translators or channel policy. Indeed, more fieldwork and research would be needed to answer this question more fully.

⁷ The point being made here is that it is not “Islamic,” but Muslim, i.e., not a contextually or relatively defined morality.

⁸ This text appears every time one tries to access a website deemed unacceptable by the authorities in the UAE.

⁹ The authorities in the Gulf use these words to justify the policies of intervention within the media and censorship in general. See a governmental report on the media in the AUE at: <http://www.almajles.gov.ae/portal/dcb43606-3c8d-4d1e-9c3a-cf8da72466c4.aspx> (Arabic, last viewed 17 August 2011).

¹⁰ See the official UAE parliament website at: <http://www.al-majles.gov.ae>

¹¹ Indeed, this contrast is even more striking given that many of the private channels also broadcast from the Gulf region. As stated earlier, free channels are channels available to the public without a monthly or yearly subscription, whereas private channels require a subscription.

¹² For a study on what is considered a straightforward and a metaphorical translation, see Toury (4, 70-1).

¹³ See Jawad (87-89)

¹⁴ See the Arabic translation website at <http://www.annabaa.org/nbanews/69/025.htm>. (Arabic, last viewed 25 August 2011). Gürçağlar explains, “Fidelity translations can involve more than one aspect of the source text and may require different strategies that go beyond the word-for-word and sense-for-sense dichotomy. At the same time, fidelity remains a major expectation in the context of translation...and free translation is often evaluated negatively. In its most extreme form, free translation involves such strategies as abridgement, summary, adaptation, imitation, vulgarization and retelling, among others. Yet in many cases, the exact demarcation between faithful and free translation is not so easy to draw” (Gürçağlar 39). See also Gürçağlar (2008 130-135) – not sure how to format this type of reference.

¹⁵ The entertainment programs (movies/series/documentaries) shown are not overtly political oeuvres, at least in terms of their content or message.

¹⁶ There are three main frameworks operating when it comes to intermediation: the original text that is being translated, the ideological framework – whether conscious or not – of the translator, and the translation policy or agenda of the company and media channel in question.

¹⁷ As stated earlier, these cultural specificities are used by the political authorities to justify censorship. See for instance a governmental report on the media in the AUE at: <http://www.almajles.gov.ae/portal/dcb43606-3c8d-4d1e-9c3a-cf8da72466c4.aspx>

¹⁸ This rationale about the “us vs them” is often used by the Gulf political authorities to justify policies. See for instance the official UAE parliament website at: <http://www.al-majles.gov.ae>

¹⁹ See a debate on translation in the Arab World conducted by al-Khaleej times (UAE) at: <http://www.alkhaleej.ae/portal/0de3d657-b8a8-458b-b79a-d45452791036.aspx>, especially comments made by Dr ‘Afaf al-Batayna.

²⁰ Such as Yam Mashadi, the author and writer of the series “Takht Sharqi” (this translates as “Oriental musical ensemble/bed,” which is a play on words). Although it is important to note that censoring bodies, such as the Gulf-State Satellite Committee, make changes to any program the Gulf states satellite channels fund or broadcast. See <http://www.aljadid.com/content/special-section-syrian-drama> (last viewed 17 August 2011).

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