The Multiple Reception of Historical Texts from Authorship to Translation: *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* by Ahmed Toufik El Madani as a Case Study – A Perspective on Translation and Language Didactics

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Abstract:

This research investigates the diverse ways in which historical texts are received, with particular emphasis on *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* by Ahmed Toufik El Madani. It argues that the process of reception is both dynamic and context-dependent, significantly shaped by the intellectual and cultural backgrounds of readers. Translation introduces additional layers of complexity, involving reinterpretation influenced by the translator's perspective and the cultural context of the target audience. This study confronts the difficulties of translating historical texts imbued with ideological and emotional significance, aiming to preserve their original context. It proposes a methodological framework for incorporating such texts into translation education to foster students' critical understanding of historical narratives and their transformation across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Keywords: Translation, historical text, act of reception, cultural approach, interpretation, *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir*

Introduction:

Historical texts are key sources for investigating past events and understanding the evolution of human societies across time. They also serve as critical pedagogical materials in translation studies, offering complex content that demands advanced translation strategies. Despite their documentary value, historical texts raise important questions concerning authorship, analytical approaches, reception processes, and translation practices. Historical writing should not be seen as an objective recording of facts, as many historical accounts were authored by individuals without formal historiographical training. These texts often reflect overlapping political, cultural, ideological, and material interests, making them subject to critical scrutiny and diverse interpretations shaped by the reader's intellectual framework and interpretive objectives.

One of the most pressing challenges in the reception of historical texts lies in translation, which can alter the original meaning while adapting the text to the cultural and epistemological framework of the target audience. Translation is not merely a linguistic operation; it constitutes a reinterpretation of historical discourse influenced by the translator's perspective and the temporal and cultural distance between source and target contexts. Thus, the reception of historical narratives varies according to shifts in language, culture, time, and ideology.

In this regard, *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* by Ahmed Toufik El Madani represents a compelling case study for examining the multiplicity of reception in historical texts. The work is characterized by a specific historical discourse, a targeted readership, and a temporally situated narrative. These features necessitate a rigorous examination of the text, especially when translation functions as a mediating process that transfers the text into a radically different cultural and historical context.

Research Problem:

Ahmed Toufik El Madani's *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* (1931) constitutes a foundational historical text, produced within a specific historical and ideological context and directed toward a well-defined audience. The work articulates intellectual, cultural, and political dimensions of Algerian history, guided by a clear objective. This situatedness raises critical questions regarding the diverse ways in which different readerships—such as scholars, historians, translators, and students—have interacted with the text over time, each bringing distinct interpretive frameworks that influence its reception and meaning.

Historical texts, including *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir*, are not neutral or purely objective records of events. They are shaped by the ideological and methodological perspectives of both their authors and their readers. Accordingly, the reception of this text is contingent upon the epistemological positions of its audience. Within translation contexts, the work undergoes multiple layers of interpretation, ranging from factual to analytical readings, and from nationalistic to transnational understandings. These interpretations are shaped by shifting linguistic, cultural, and ideological frameworks, which reconfigure the historical meanings conveyed by the original.

The primary research problem addressed in this study is: How does the multiplicity of reception—from authorship to translation—reshape the construction and transmission of historical meaning in *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir*? In relation to this, the study further explores how variable reception affects historical understanding within new linguistic and cultural environments, and what role ideological and methodological contexts play in shaping these divergent interpretations.

This inquiry gives rise to several subsidiary questions: In what ways do readers' intellectual and methodological orientations influence their understanding of the text? How does translation act as a mechanism for reconstructing historical, intellectual, and cultural contexts in another language, thereby engaging a new audience distinct from the original? How can this historical text be integrated into translation pedagogy to develop students' analytical and technical competencies in translating ideologically and culturally embedded narratives?

Thus, the objective of the study is twofold: first, to analyze how diverse cultural, intellectual, and political frameworks influence reception, audience identification, and temporality; and second, to evaluate the pedagogical utility of the text in translator training, with the aim of enhancing students' ability to engage critically with historically and ideologically charged materials.

Methodological Approach

This research utilizes an analytical-hermeneutic methodology, which is particularly effective for analyzing historical texts that encompass various layers of receptionʾ interpretation, and translation. Instead of simply outlining the structure of Kitāb al-Jazāʾir, the study engages in a critical analysis of its ideological, cultural, and rhetorical aspects. The hermeneutic framework facilitates a detailed investigation into how the text's meaning shifts across different temporal and cultural landscapes, particularly when influenced by translation. Furthermore, the research incorporates comparative analysis, especially in juxtaposing the initial reception of the work within its colonial backdrop with its reinterpretation in modern Anglophone academic contexts. It also adopts a descriptive-applied perspective in the pedagogical segment, suggesting practical strategies for integrating historically and ideologically significant texts into translation training programs. This multifaceted approach emphasizes the dynamic relationship between authorship, readership, and translation, showcasing the transformative nature of textual reception and the pivotal role of translators as cultural intermediaries.

Chapter One: Analysis of Theoretical Frameworks
1. The Act of Reception in Historical and Literary Texts

The concept of reception constitutes a central pillar in the theory of reading and interpretation, particularly as developed by the Constance School of literary theory in Germany during the 1970s. This school marked a clear break with the preceding structuralist approaches, which had treated literary texts as self-contained and closed systems governed by internal linguistic and symbolic relationships (معرف, 2013, p. 268). In contrast, the Constance School, especially through the works of Hans Robert Jauss, fundamentally shifted the traditional understanding of the relationship between the text and its reader (ياوس, 2016, pp. 109–118).

In his seminal project *Aesthetic of Reception*, Jauss overturned the conventional model that positioned either the author as the sole generator of meaning or the text as the ultimate source of interpretation. Instead, he emphasized the role of the *historical reader*, who revives the literary work through the act of reading—a process shaped by the reader's *horizon of expectations*. This horizon is not a fixed or static entity; rather, it is dynamic and influenced by the reader's surrounding cultural, social, epistemological, and political contexts.

This position was further consolidated by Wolfgang Iser, another leading figure of the Constance School, who focused on the openness of the text and its "gaps" or "indeterminacies." These incomplete spaces in the text invite the reader to engage in a constructive act of reading (إيزر, 2010, pp. 100–102). Iser also introduced the notion of the implied reader—the ideal reader anticipated by the text, whose interpretive path is subtly guided yet not strictly predetermined (إيزر، 2010، ص. 100-102) . This implied reader retains the autonomy to deviate from the interpretive trajectory suggested by the text.

As a result, the act of reception is no longer considered a mere passive process of meaning absorption. Instead, it is recognized as a dynamic and interactive engagement in which the reader reshapes the text according to their individual, social, and cultural contexts. Texts, particularly those of a historical nature, are not static or unchangeable; they are, in the words of Umberto Eco, "open works" (opera aperta), perpetually open to reinterpretation and re-expression with every new reading (أيكو, 2001, pp. 16–43).

The process of reception becomes increasingly intricate within a historical framework, where a reader's awareness of historical occurrences, the distance in time, and their ideological commitments significantly influence interpretation. The interplay of collective memories and political interests adds further layers of complexity to this interpretive endeavor. Jauss highlighted this notion by articulating a key tenet of reception theory: readers do not engage with a text as if they were devoid of prior experiences. Rather, they come equipped with existing knowledge, ideological beliefs, aesthetic tastes, and cognitive structures. These factors shape their reactions to the text, creating a dialectical tension between anticipated outcomes and the actual content of the text—sometimes meeting those expectations, and at other times challenging them (ياوس، 2016، ص 143–146).

Importantly, reception cannot be separated from historical and epistemological context. A text such as *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* by Ahmed Toufik El Madani, which was read in the 20th century through a particular lens, will be interpreted quite differently in the 21st century. This shift is due to intellectual, social, and political transformations that shape the reception horizon in each historical epoch.

2. Translation as an Interpretive Act

Translation transcends the mere mechanical conversion of one linguistic system into another; it is, instead, a multifaceted interpretive and creative endeavor that encompasses various dimensions of reading, understanding, and re-expressing ideas. Scholars like Antoine Berman, Walter Benjamin, Marianne Lederer, and Danica Seleskovitch have highlighted that translation is fundamentally a hermeneutic activity. Berman posits that translation is inherently biased; it involves what he terms a "trial of the foreign" (*l'épreuve de l'étranger*), which refers to the translator's engagement with the cultural and symbolic differences present in the source text. He contends that the translator should aim to preserve this otherness during the translation process rather than diminish or normalize it. From his viewpoint, the ethical responsibility of the translator is to allow the foreign elements to resonate within the translated work, maintaining its intricate nature (برمان، 2010، ص 54–56). Walter Benjamin, in his influential essay "The Task of the Translator" (*Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*, 1923), expands on this idea. He argues that the translator's function is not merely to replicate the original text but to uncover its potential for an ongoing existence (*Fortleben*) (بلبولة، 2016، ص 17–22). Similarly, Marianne Lederer and Danica Seleskovitch underscore the role of interpretation in translation, emphasizing that conveying meaning requires a deep understanding beyond linguistic structures (سيليسكوفيتش ولودورير ، 2009).

Translation is thus an act of renewal—a re-presentation that allows the original text to survive and transform in a new linguistic and cultural space. The translator, in this sense, becomes a second, distinguished reader: an active interpreter who re-creates the text in a new language, navigating between linguistic, epistemological, and socio-cultural frameworks.

From this perspective, the translator is not a passive conduit of meaning but an *active agent* who engages with both the source and target texts, exercising discretion, sensitivity, and

creativity. Every translation is, at its core, a *selective act[1]*. The translator engages in interpretive choices concerning meaning, subtlety, imagery, and conceptual alignment. These choices become particularly complex when translating historical texts, as they introduce further layers of difficulty, including: the cultural particularities of the era in question, proper names and historical titles that possess localized significance, terminology that is specific to a certain time period, and the historian's perspective, which may not align with established academic historiography but instead reflect personal experience or ideological bias. Such elements necessitate *double interpretation*: (1) interpreting the author's historical vision and situatedness, and (2) adapting this vision to the epistemological and cultural framework of the target audience.

Historical translators often face a critical dilemma: either (a) to preserve the cultural specificity of the original—retaining its ambiguities, references, and contextual density—or (b) to simplify and adapt the discourse to suit audiences who may lack the original context's cultural or intellectual background. The former risks alienating the target reader; the latter risks distorting the integrity of the source.

Sometimes, however, ideological or political pressures within the target culture influence the translator to alter the discourse structure, reshaping the original text to fit the priorities of the receiving environment. This reorientation can transform the historical text into a tool for reconstructing historical consciousness in a new frame.

This interpretive tension is extensively theorized by thinkers such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, Lawrence Venuti, Itamar Even-Zohar, and Gideon Toury, particularly through the concepts of domestication and foreignization. Schleiermacher posits that a translator must either move the reader toward the text (*foreignization*) or the text toward the reader (*domestication*), a dichotomy later reinterpreted and politicized by Venuti, who critiques the ethnocentric erasure of the foreign in Anglo-American translation practices (Yang, 2010, pp. 77–78).

From this perspective, translation is a crucial phase in the process of reception. The translator begins by engaging with the source text, analyzing it on various dimensions—linguistic, cultural, and ideological—before presenting it to a different audience. This audience encounters a translated text that embodies the influences of all preceding interpretive actions. Consequently, the translated work serves as a parallel text, encapsulating not only the original intent but also the accumulated layers of interpretation that have developed over time, spanning from the initial creation to its subsequent readings, translations, and receptions.

3. A Didactical Approach to Translation: Between Interpretation and Competence Development

Translation today has evolved into a complex industry composed of various actors—including translators, linguistic editors, publishing houses, and others—each contributing to the

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[1] It is worth noting here that this selectivity operates on two levels—internal and external. If it is not self-imposed by the translator, it is, in many cases, imposed by an external party related to the translational institution and its agents. As a result, the translator's choices become directed. For further clarification, one may refer to the following source: ليلى فاسي، التصرف في الترجمة خيار إيديولوجي أم واقع مفروض، مجلة القارئ للدراسات الأدبية والنقدية واللغوية المجلد 06، العدد# 01، مارس 2023، (339-332)، ص 338.

multifaceted process of what is termed the translation act. This evolution has given rise to a distinct educational domain known as the Didactics of Translation which merges modern translation theory with pedagogical objectives aimed at cultivating practitioners capable of viewing translation as an act of understanding, interpretation, and cultural and epistemological transfer. (Djemmah, 2024, pp. 105–108).

Translation didactics thus extends beyond the mere teaching of how to "transpose" between two languages. It recognizes translation as an interpretive practice grounded in both linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge (سيليسكوفيتش ولودورير ، 2009). Consequently, training in this field emphasizes two crucial analytical steps prior to translation:

1. **Textual analysis**, to decode the source text's stylistic, discursive, and rhetorical structures.
2. **Documentary research**, to reconstruct the historical, cultural, and ideological context underlying the text.

This two-step process enables students to reveal not only the explicit content but also the implicit aspects, such as subtexts, silences, and intertextual references. This understanding equips them to make well-informed decisions in translation concerning terminological equivalence, metaphorical significance, discursive strategies, and pragmatic adjustments tailored to the target audience.

Hence, the classroom becomes a dynamic site for developing a range of interdisciplinary competencies:

- **Research skills** (bibliographic, historical, and cultural),
- **Critical interpretation** (reading between the lines),
- **Reformulation and paraphrasing techniques**, and
- **Precise linguistic proficiency** in both the source and target languages.

These pedagogical strategies are particularly valuable when applied to historical texts, such as *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* by *Ahmed Toufik El Madani*. Such texts present unique didactic challenges, including:

- Accurate rendering of proper names and historical events,
- Sensitivity to time-specific terminology,
- Careful handling of ideological or historiographical discourse,
- Maintaining fidelity to the source's cultural horizon without alienating the target reader.

Therefore, the teaching of historical translation must equip learners with analytic tools that enable them to understand the original horizon of reception—a concept drawn from Hans Robert Jauss's reception theory—and reinterpret it in light of the knowledge systems and expectations of the target readership.

From this perspective, the translation trainee should not be seen as a passive conduit of meaning, but rather as an active and productive recipient who contributes meaningfully to the construction of textual significance in the target language. This view aligns with the core principles of the Constance School, especially the works of Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, which emphasize the reader's role in shaping textual meaning through dynamic engagement and projection.

Thus, the didactical approach to translation fosters a comprehensive view of the student as:

- A critical reader of the source text,
- A cultural mediator,
- An interpretive agent,
- And a creative rewriter contributing to the ongoing life of the text in a new linguistic and cultural context.
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Chapter Two: A Case Study and its Pedagogical Applications
– The Content and Reception of *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir (the Book of Algeria)*

The Algerian intellectual and nationalist struggle of the 20th century witnessed the emergence of a generation of young, enthusiastic scholars who mastered the Arabic language and engaged rigorously with the country's history. These individuals took up the pen as a tool of resistance, using historical writing to defend the national identity and raise awareness among the youth about their heritage and the necessity of reclaiming their land and freedom. Among the most prominent figures of this movement was the historian and former statesman **Ahmed Toufik El Madani**.

Ahmed Toufik El Madani published Kitab al-Jaza'ir (The Book of Algeria) in 1931, coinciding with the centenary of France's colonization of Algeria—a time characterized by political inertia and a decline in Algerian identity. This work serves as a counter-narrative to colonial and Orientalist assertions that Algeria's historical and cultural legacy commenced with French rule. Driven by a deepening concern regarding the erosion of Algerian Islamic identity, especially among the youth integrating into colonial culture, El Madani aimed to provide a national historiography that illustrated the persistence of the Algerian state from 1000 BCE to 1931. The book is organized into 14 comprehensive chapters, which are categorized into two main thematic areas: Chapters 1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 14 concentrate on historical, legal, economic, geographic, and statistical evaluations, while Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, and 13 examine the living conditions of Algerians, including their educational and health systems, as well as their socio-cultural contexts.

El Madani's fluency in French allowed him to engage critically with French-language sources, including works such as: *Maurice Viollette's L'Algérie vivra-t-elle ?*, *Stéphane Gsell's Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, *The Almanac of al-Manṣūr for the year 1348/1929*, official statistical records from 1931, and various periodicals and contemporary observations (بلقاسم، 2007، ص) 212).

This enabled him to craft a historical account that relied on both **primary documents**—including legal texts and statistics—and **eyewitness testimony**, thereby enriching the empirical foundation of his work.

The Reception of *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir*: Between Intellectual Acclaim and Historiographical Critique

The publication of *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* was met with critical acclaim from prominent intellectuals and nationalists of the time. Figures such as ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ibn Bādīs praised the work, stating that *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir*, in this form and manner, is how duty is fulfilled (ابن باديس، 1932، ص 160), Shakīb Arsalān (the "Prince of Eloquence") (أرسلان، 1973، ص 105، الهامش 1), Charles-Robert Ageron (the French historian) (Ageron, 1980, p. 88), Omar Rāsim, as well as scholars like

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Charles-André Julien, Jacques Berque, and Louis Massignon, all recognized the significance of the work (موسم، 2022، ص 520).

However, the book was not without its critical detractors, especially in terms of academic standards: Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Faḍāla criticized El Madani for his excessive use of the first-person singular, which created the impression that he was the originator of the ideas and narratives he presented. Faḍāla argued that this rhetorical strategy invited reader skepticism. He also noted the absence of proper bibliographic referencing, footnotes, and the occasional reliance on colloquial expressions, which deviated from the conventions of modern historiographical writing (فضلاء، 1982، ص 27). ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jilālī offered a more technical critique, pointing out El Madani's omission of key historical episodes, such as the Hafsid dynasty's control over eastern Algeria. He also noted inconsistencies in the use of Hijrī and Gregorian dates, which could confuse the reader, and the absence of biographical entries on renowned Algerian scholars and reformists, in contrast to the detailed accounts of certain French colonial administrators (الجيلالي، 1932، ص 267).

An examination of his contemporaries reveals that his approach to composing the book closely aligned with the established norms and conventions of his peers during that era. It is crucial to note that El Madani was not producing a history book in the conventional Western academic framework; instead, he was developing a text with a dual purpose: firstly, to reclaim the Algerian collective memory during a colonial period that aimed to obliterate and distort it; and secondly, to foster national consciousness among Algerian readers, encouraging them to acknowledge their historical identity. It is commendable that he sought to document national history from an Algerian viewpoint, which contrasts sharply with the colonial French narrative. His work, Kitāb al-Jazāʾir (The Book of Algeria), serves as an encyclopedic and documentary piece that articulates the author's interpretation of Algeria's history, rooted in local sources and firsthand accounts, and infused with a patriotic critical spirit that emphasizes the importance of historical awareness.

Educational Implications

From an educational standpoint, Kitāb al-Jazāʾir serves as a comprehensive resource for training in translation. It presents a variety of challenges that learners must address, including: the accuracy of historical terminology, the navigation of ideological subtleties, the recognition of implicit cultural allusions, the resolution of historiographical discrepancies, and the balance between literal and interpretive translation methods.

 By engaging with this work, students can cultivate advanced skills in: contextual analysis, by situating the text within its colonial and anti-colonial contexts; interpretation, by unraveling both explicit content and underlying messages; critical awareness, through comparative analyses with colonial and orientalist historical narratives; and translation decision-making, particularly concerning voice, tone, and ideological perspective.

 This case study further illustrates the importance of utilizing historical texts as educational tools, equipping students not only with linguistic skills but also with the ability to act as critical interpreters and intercultural mediators—roles that are vital for translators dealing with texts that are historically and politically significant.

Particularities of the Text: Linguistic, Rhetorical, cultural and Translational Challenges in *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir*

Despite its classification as a scholarly historical work, *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* by Ahmed Toufik El Madani exhibits a complex stylistic structure that straddles the boundaries of historical analysis, religious sentiment, literary flair, and political advocacy. This multifaceted composition creates a unique translational challenge that must be addressed with critical sensitivity, particularly in the context of translator training and didactics:

1. Scientific Objectivity vs. Religious and Emotional Inflections

In its core structure—especially in chapters **01, 02, 07, 09, 10, 12, and 14**—the book adheres to a scientific tone, characterized by:

- Direct, expository language devoid of metaphor or emotive embellishment.
- Detailed presentations of historical data, economic statistics, legal systems, and geographical facts.
- A commitment to objective documentation, likely influenced by al-Madanī's use of official records and French colonial statistics.

However, despite this surface-level academic rigor, several non-neutral elements permeate the text:

a. Religious Overtones

The book begins with **Qurʾānic verse 18:10** from *Sūrat al-Kahf*, cast as an invocation. Throughout the text, El Madani integrates Qurʾānic references both explicitly and implicitly, infusing his historiography with Islamic theological resonance.

For instance, El Madani explicitly cites two Qur'anic verses when describing the governance of Arab Muslims following the conquest of North Africa. The first:

"(p 18 ,المدني)" "لا اكراه في الدين قد تبين الرشد من الغي""

"There shall be no compulsion in religion. The right path has become distinct from error" (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:256) (translation accessible via https://surahquran.com/english-arabic-aya-256-sora-2.html), and the second,

"(p 18 ،المدني)""انما المؤمنون اخوة فأصلحوا بين أخويكم""

"The believers are but brothers, so reconcile between your brothers" (Surah Al-Hujuraat, 49:10), (translation accessible via https://surahquran.com/english-arabic-aya-10-sora-49.) are employed to underscore the principles of religious tolerance and social cohesion that, according to him, characterized early Muslim rule in the region.

This is not merely ornamental but reflects:

- A national-religious ideology, emphasizing the Islamic identity of Algeria.
- The use of religiously charged vocabulary and expressions to signal allegiance to Islamic values.
- The integration of religious institutions—such as *ṭuruq* (Sufi orders) and *zāwiyas*—into a broader socio-historical narrative, albeit treated through a quasi-scientific lens.

b. Literary and Emotional Tone

In chapters **03, 04, 05, 06, 08, 11, and 13**, which detail the lived experiences of the Algerian people (education, healthcare, social conditions), El Madani's tone shifts perceptibly. Here, the narrative incorporates:

- Descriptive passages rich in metaphor and imagery.
- Empathetic expressions, which indicate the author's solidarity with the oppressed Algerian population.
- A rhetorical style that blurs the line between historiography and personal testimony, reinforcing the idea that the author is both observer and participant.

Consequently, drawing on the theory of translation as a form of re-writing, as articulated by Levi and Venuti, one can assert that the translation of Kitāb al-Jazāʾir constitutes a novel rendition of the original text, infused with the translator's influence and shaped by the contextual demands of its reception. This phenomenon allows the translated version to produce new interpretations that may align with or even contradict the original author's intentions. The resulting hybrid genre, which combines elements of documentary and political advocacy, presents unique challenges for translators. The emotional resonance, stemming from a shared experience of suffering and nationalistic fervor, risks being diminished or misinterpreted when placed within a different linguistic and cultural framework.

2. Translational Specificities of the Text

Several intrinsic characteristics distinguish *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* from other historical texts, requiring a tailored translation strategy:

a. Historical Context and Symbolic Weight

The book's publication in 1931—during France's centenary celebration of colonizing Algeria—imbues it with semi-sacred historical value. As a counter-narrative to colonial historiography, it constitutes: a testimonial of resistance, a repository of national memory, a political and pedagogical manifesto for the Algerian youth.

This memorial function requires translators to maintain semantic fidelity and ideological accuracy, as the book is not merely descriptive, but prescriptive, urging future generations to preserve their identity.

b. Didactic Purpose

The text is addressed directly to Algerian youth. Its goal is clear:

- To inform: by presenting objective facts about Algerian history and civilization.
- To educate: by instilling pride and awareness in young readers.
- To mobilize: through emotionally charged appeals to patriotism and cultural revival.

For instance, he says:

"إليكم أيها الشبان المسلمون في أرض الجزائر الكريمة، أتقدم بهذا الكتاب "(المدني, p 02)

Which translates into: To you, youthful Muslim population residing in the esteemed territory of Algeria, I offer this literary work.

"ها أنا ذا يا شبان المسلمين أقدم لكم " كتاب الجزائر"، وقد جمعت لكم بين دفتيه، ما يجب على كل جزائري مسلم أن يعرفه عن بلاده؛ وفيه نهاية ما أوصلني إليه بحثي واجتهادي في هذا المضمار. "(المدني, 03 p)

Which translates into: Here I am, young Muslims, presenting to you "The Book of Algeria." I have collected for you between its two covers, what every Algerian Muslim should know about

his country; it contains the outcome of my research and perseverance in this field had led me to.

This educational intentionality affects register, tone, and lexical choice. The translator must grapple with how to preserve the imperative, motivational quality of the source text, especially when the target audience (e.g., modern anglophone scholars or students) is neither identical nor situated within the same sociopolitical framework.

c. Cultural and Semantic Density

The book is laden with culture-bound expressions, many of which lack direct equivalence in English: Terminology related to Islamic religious life (e.g., *ṭarīqa*, *zāwiya*, *ʿulamāʾ*), social customs and indigenous institutions, expressions reflecting colonial-era social hierarchies.

This dense cultural freight necessitates the use of paratextual strategies (footnotes, glossaries, translator's prefaces) to ensure that semantic nuance and ideological valence are retained without distortion.

> For example, the text is rich in cultural implications that possess material, emotional, and symbolic significance within the source culture, making them challenging to convey in the target language. For instance, terms such as dawāwīr(المدني, p 361) (traditional villages) may be explained through a calque in the target language, yet they lose their cultural resonance. The same issue arises with the term al-qurbā (the plural of qurbī) (المدني, p 359) and the word ḥijāb(المدني, p 362). Additionally, musical terminology such as nawābat (musical cycles), including jārakah, ṣīkah, al-muwāl, al-ʿIrāq, al-raml al-māyah, al-zaydān, and others (المدني, p 364), also presents similar challenges.

d. Rhetorical Ambiguity and Affective Registers

Perhaps the most significant translational challenge stems from the **emotive registers** of the text:

- The first level of affectivity originates in the author's concern for Algerian youth—his fears for their future and hopes for their awakening.
- The second level is his attempt to evoke emotional identification in his readers—by mirroring their suffering, urging solidarity, and celebrating historical glories.

For example, when he discusses the Muslim laborers in the thirteenth section, he poses the question: فكيف يستطيع إذا أن يعمل ويعيش؟ (المدني, p 357) which may translate into "How can he work and live under these conditions?" This inquiry is not posed directly; instead, it conveys a sense of sorrow regarding the difficult circumstances faced by the Algerian populace at that time. His intention is to engage the Algerian youth and foster empathy by encouraging them to reflect on these issues. Similarly, when addressing the Muslim woman, he states: كيف تريد أن تكون حال المرأة في وسط عماله كما رأيت، وحالته الصحية كما سمعت؟ (المدني, p 362) which may translate into: "How do you expect the woman to be among his workers, given what I have observed and her health condition, as I have heard?" Here, he employs a rhetorical question to involve the audience for the same purpose.

Translating this empathic dynamic is inherently problematic, because:

- The original emotional resonance arises from shared historical experience.

- The source-receiver relationship is culturally and temporally specific.
- A literal translation may read as flat or didactic in English, while a dynamic translation may risk misrepresenting the emotional depth or political stakes.

Translational Implications

The particularities of *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* place it at the intersection of historiography, theology, literature, and political pedagogy. For translation scholars and educators, it offers a compelling case study of:

- Genre hybridity and register shifts,
- Ideological embeddedness in language,
- Translatability of cultural memory,
- And the ethical dilemmas surrounding historical accuracy vs. reader accessibility.

In light of these complexities, any translation of the text should be accompanied by critical apparatuses that:

- Clarify the socio-historical backdrop,
- Contextualize culture-specific terms,
- And foreground the affective intentions of the author.

Such a strategy does not merely serve accuracy; it preserves the political function and emotive power of the original, enabling a richer and more faithful cross-cultural transmission.

The Horizon of the Original Reader's Expectations

According to the concept of the *horizon of expectations* as theorized by Hans Robert Jauss (2016), the original Algerian reader of *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* approached the text with a specific set of cultural, ideological, and emotional presuppositions shaped by the sociohistorical context of colonial Algeria. This reader, as envisioned by El Madani himself (1931), was in urgent need of the knowledge the book sought to transmit—knowledge concerning national identity, cultural heritage, and historical continuity.

The Algerian readers of the early 1930s were not merely a passive recipient of historical information; instead, they actively engaged in the national conversation. Under the burdensome influence of French colonial rule, these readers exhibited a keen awareness of issues related to national identity and political discourse. As a result, Kitāb al-Jazāʾir was perceived not just as a scholarly historical narrative, but as an essential medium for the safeguarding and rejuvenation of collective memory.

This context of reception elevated the book beyond a mere collection of information; it evolved into a tool for ideological expression and a declaration of educational principles. The expectations of readers were influenced by the dominant political atmosphere, characterized by an increasing sense of nationalism and a desire for cultural validation. This environment encouraged a dynamic engagement with the text, allowing the Algerian reader to see themselves as both the subject and the audience, interpreting the historical account as a motivational prompt and a reaffirmation of their identity.

The Evolution of Critical Reception of *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir*

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With the passage of time, especially after the conclusion of the colonial period and Algeria's independence, Kitāb al-Jazāʾir experienced a notable transformation in how it was received. Originally viewed as a rallying document and a national manifesto in the context of colonial resistance, the text has increasingly been approached through more critical and scholarly lenses. While it has not yet garnered the extensive academic scrutiny it merits, it has nonetheless drawn some partial analyses, including those by Messoum Belkacem (2007) and Moussem Abdelhafid (2022), among others.

In the intellectual environment following independence, scholarly work has emerged as a focal point for reevaluation, especially when analyzed through the frameworks of postcolonial theory, discourse analysis, and cultural historiography. These analytical approaches allow researchers to explore how history and national identity are formed within contexts influenced by colonial and postcolonial power relations (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 1988).

Kitāb al-Jazāʾir is now recognized not just as a historical document but also as a cultural artifact that plays a significant role in shaping and sharing collective memory from a particular ideological perspective. Within this framework, the book may be approached as:

- A discursive intervention within a broader project of cultural resistance, aiming to counter colonial narratives and affirm indigenous historical agency.
- A document that interrogates the role of the nationalist intellectual in shaping historical consciousness and negotiating relationships with both political authority and historiographic traditions.
- A text that implicitly marginalizes certain alternative historical voices or subaltern perspectives, thereby engaging in its own internal politics of inclusion and exclusion.

This repositioning of *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* within the field of critical historiography and postcolonial critique reveals the layered complexity of its narrative strategies, rhetorical choices, and ideological functions. As such, it opens up new avenues for re-reading the text not only as a national chronicle but also as a site of cultural production that embodies both resistance and contestation.

The Impact of Translation on the Audience

When Kitāb al-Jazāʾir is translated for audiences who do not speak Arabic, such as English speakers, the interpretation of the text relies on an alternative cultural context. Consequently, a non-Arabic reader might perceive the work not as an inspiring appeal for freedom, but rather as a simple historical account thereby reducing the original text's propagandistic effect (Lefevere, 1992; Baker, 2006). Additionally, the reading may be influenced by Orientalist perspectives, which are informed by existing stereotypes regarding Algeria and its historical narrative.

The difference between the original audience and the target audience goes beyond mere language. It extends into cultural and ideological backgrounds, and even the emotional engagement with the historical material. For instance, the emotional appeal, which is central to the original text, is something that the original reader might easily connect with, but which a target reader may fail to grasp due to their lack of shared context.

In accordance with the translation theory that views translation as a form of re-writing, as articulated by scholars such as André Lefevere and Lawrence Venuti, one can assert that the translation of Kitāb al-Jazāʾir represents a new iteration of the original text. This iteration is influenced by the translator's ideological perspective and is molded by the cultural, historical, and political milieu in which it is interpreted (Lefevere, 1992; Venuti, 1995). The process of re-inscribing the source text may entail alterations in tone, focus, or even omissions, which inevitably generate additional layers of meaning—some of which may resonate with the author's original intentions, while others may diverge from them (Hermans, 2007; Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990). Consequently, translation transcends mere linguistic conversion; it emerges as a cultural act of interpretation and representation, reminiscent of Claude Lévi-Strauss's anthropological concept of the transformation of "mythemes" across different systems of signification (Lévi-Strauss, 1963).

Translation is inherently a subjective endeavor. It transforms the original text, tailoring it for a new audience that possesses distinct interpretations, cultural beliefs, and emotional reactions. In the context of Kitāb al-Jazāʾir, this process of re-interpretation has the potential to either enhance or undermine the cultural and ideological significance of the original work. Consequently, the translator faces the challenge of maintaining the original emotional tone and historical significance while addressing the unavoidable cultural and linguistic disparities that exist between the source and target languages.

Proposed Methodology for Translating *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* into English

Translating *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* by Ahmed Toufik El Madani—a seminal text situated at the intersection of historiography, national consciousness, and anti-colonial discourse—requires methodological rigor. In line with the translation-as-rewriting framework (Lefevere, 1992) and culturally-anchored translation theories (Venuti, 1995; Berman, 1985), this methodology serves as both a pedagogical guide and a theoretical model for translating ideologically charged historical texts. It is especially suitable for training students in advanced translation and postcolonial textual mediation.

1. Pre-Translation Analysis of the Source Text

a. Historical and Ideological Contextualization

The analysis should be conducted through both Colonial and Postcolonial frameworks, prompting the student to explore the French colonial backdrop and its influence on Algerian historiography, as illustrated in the works of Fanon (1963) and Ashcroft et al. (2002). Additionally, the student is expected to understand how El Madani's narrative challenges colonial epistemologies and asserts historical agency. Furthermore, the student should contextualize the text within the discourse surrounding national identity formation, recognizing its rhetorical roles in shaping the consciousness of the post-independence era, as discussed by Anderson (1983).

b. Cultural and Symbolic Signifiers

Students are encouraged to focus on culturally specific references within the text, particularly in identifying toponyms, anthroponyms, significant events, and symbolic figures that carry nationalistic implications. Baker (1992) notes that these "culture-specific items" frequently

necessitate explanatory approaches to achieve adequate interpretation. Furthermore, regarding metaphors and Islamic rhetoric, Berman's (1985) critique of "ethnocentric translation" suggests that metaphors embedded in Islamic or Maghrebi contexts should be maintained or annotated instead of being adapted to fit a more familiar framework.

c. Ideological Underpinnings

Students must not overlook the concepts of Nationalism and Intellectual Emancipation, and they should acknowledge the role of language in this text as an ideological instrument. In line with Lefevere's (1992) perspective on translation as a form of ideological manipulation, students ought to be guided in recognizing how ideology is embedded within the lexical, syntactic, and discursive dimensions.

2. Define the New Target Audience:

- **The English-Speaking Audience:**

Utilizing Hans Robert Jauss's (2016) reception theory alongside Venuti's (1998) concept of "readerly positioning," this stage focuses on two key aspects: Target Audience Profiling, where students are tasked with identifying the sociocultural context, expectations, and historical distance of Anglophone readers, such as Western scholars or general audiences who may lack familiarity with Maghrebi anti-colonialism. Additionally, it involves Bridging the Epistemic Gap by employing pedagogical resources, including glossaries, footnotes, and prefaces, to enhance understanding while preserving the text's political and emotional nuances (Venuti, 1995).

3. Adopt the Most Suitable Translation Strategy:

A. Faithful Translation with Paratextual Mediation

From my perspective, the most effective approach for students is Venuti's Foreignization Strategy, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining the integrity of the source text by retaining essential cultural and ideological terms, along with providing paratextual support (Genette, 1997). This strategy entails a commitment to linguistic fidelity and historical accuracy, requiring students to adopt the roles of both historian and ethnographer in order to preserve the "textual aura" of the original work.

B. Dynamic Equivalence

By applying Nida's Dynamic Equivalence Model (1964), students can develop communicative strategies that enable them to express meaning fluently in the target language, particularly when dealing with intricate syntactic structures. In terms of Sentence Structure Adaptation, students are able to convert lengthy Arabic hypotactic constructions into more accessible English paratactic forms, all while maintaining the original nuances.

Translating *Kitāb al-Jazāʾir* is a challenging task, requiring a balance between faithfulness to the original text and the cultural adaptation needed for the new audience. By employing a combination of faithful translation, dynamic equivalence, and interpretive strategies, the translator can ensure that the core messages of resistance, national identity, and historical memory are conveyed effectively in English, while maintaining the emotional and ideological impact of the original work.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the act of reception in historical texts is not merely a process of information consumption, but a complex operation that intertwines the intellectual, ideological, and methodological factors of the author, the translator, and the receiver. This dynamic is clearly evident in the analysis of the reception of Kitāb al-Jazāʾir by Ahmed Toufik El Madani, where we highlighted how the cultural and temporal background of the reader influences the interpretation and re-production of historical texts through translation.

The study has shown that translation is not just a linguistic transfer; rather, it is an interpretive act that reshapes the original discourse through a new perspective, making it an integral part of the multiple receptions of historical texts. Each translation rewrites history from a different viewpoint, raising issues related to textual fidelity, interaction with the cultural background, and the transmission of the ideological dimensions inherent in the original text.

The study further asserts that the instruction of translation for historical texts necessitates sophisticated methodologies grounded in frameworks such as translation competence theory and interactive strategies. These methodologies not only equip students with linguistic transfer abilities but also enhance their capacity to analyze the historical and cultural contexts of the texts, comprehend both the original and new reception horizons, and make informed decisions throughout the translation process. Consequently, it can be posited that the diverse receptions of historical texts, whether through their initial interpretations or translations, represent more than a simple interaction between a text and its audience; rather, it is a dynamic process that continuously redefines meaning at each stage. This underscores the importance of studying both reception and translation as essential academic pursuits for comprehending the formation of historical discourses and their influence across different times and cultures.

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