

Preliminary Norms Of Translating Arab Spring Dystopian Novels To English: A Paratextual Analysis Of The Queue And Seasons Of Martyrdom Novels

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Abstract

Translated Arabic novels provide insight into the social, cultural, and identity aspects of Arab nations, yet translating these works is complex due to cultural nuances and varying norms. This research explores the preliminary norms influencing the selection and translation of Arabic novels into English post-Arab Spring, using *The Queue* by Basma Abdel Aziz (2013, translated 2016) and *Season of Martyrdom* by Jamal Naji (2015, translated 2016) as case studies. Applying Toury's (2012) theory of translation norms, the study shows how social, educational, and political factors shape translation choices and impact cross-cultural communication. The study explores how sociopolitical contexts, market demands, and publishing trends shape which narratives are deemed suitable for translation and how these choices reflect broader global perceptions of the Arab world. The analysis employs Gideon Toury's Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) framework, focusing on both preliminary norms—such as selection criteria and translation policies—and paratextual elements, including cover design, prefaces, and promotional material, which impact the reception and interpretation of the translated works. The findings reveal that the selected novels are framed to emphasize themes of resistance, identity, and reform, highlighting the complex interplay between literature, politics, and translation. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of translation in shaping the global literary representation of the Arab Spring.

Keyword: Basma Abdel Aziz; Jamal Naji; Descriptive Translation Studies; Translation; Arabic Novel

INTRODUCTION

The Arab Spring catalyzed a surge in politically charged literature across the Arab world, highlighting political unrest and its human impact. Translating these works into English enables cross-cultural engagement but is influenced by political considerations and stereotypes (Ismail, 2015; Shamma, 2016; Khan et al., 2021). Western interest in contemporary Arabic novels has grown, reflecting post-9/11 and Arab Uprising shifts (Alzghoul, 2018). Despite this, the sociocultural dynamics of translating Arabic literature are underexplored, impacting translator roles and translation strategies (Aldawood, 2017). Marusek (2022) argues that Arabic literature can serve as social critique, inspiring reflection on societal change. Translation has shifted from purely literary purposes to providing political and social insights into Arab societies (Anati, 2020). This paper

examines the translation norms and paratextual elements—cover designs, blurbs, and forewords—of two Arab Spring novels, *The Queue* by Basma Abdel Aziz and *Season of Martyrdom* by Jamal Naji, showing how these factors shape their reception. Using Toury's (2012) theory of translation norms, this study explores how social and political contexts influence the selection and translation of Arabic novels into English, using the two novels as case studies to analyze cross-cultural communication.

The paratexts of translated Arab Spring novels—such as titles, cover designs, prefaces, and introductions—provide critical insights into the translation norms and strategies influencing Arabic-to-English translations. These elements reflect the choices made by publishers and translators to enhance cultural accessibility and marketability for Western audiences, often reshaping narratives to emphasize themes like resistance, oppression, or human rights. Such modifications can indicate whether a domestication strategy is employed, making the text more relatable, or a foreignization approach that preserves its cultural distinctiveness. Analyzing these paratextual features reveals how publishers navigate the political sensitivities surrounding the Arab Spring, highlighting which themes are prioritized and how these texts are positioned within the English literary market (Alblooshi, 2021). Ultimately, these choices expose the complex dynamics of cross-cultural representation and illustrate how translation practices shape the reception and interpretation of Arab Spring literature in English-speaking contexts.

This paper addresses two primary research questions: What are the essential preliminary translation norms for selecting Arabic novels related to the Arab Spring for translation into English? What paratextual norms govern the translation of these novels, particularly in preserving their cultural, political, and emotional integrity? The objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the translation processes for *The Queue* and *Seasons of Martyrdom*. This analysis will be grounded in established translation theories and will delve into the intricacies of how cultural and political elements are effectively conveyed to an English-speaking audience. Additionally, it will examine the impact of paratextual elements, such as the translator's notes, blurbs featuring comments from English readers, and the covers of the novels in the target texts.

The Arab Spring novels often delve into dystopian themes, exploring issues such as authoritarianism, censorship, and societal collapse. These themes resonate deeply within the context of the Arab Spring, making them particularly significant for translation. *The Queue* and *Season of Martyrdom* reflect these themes, offering valuable insights into the socio-political climate of the time. Arabic Dystopian Fiction and Arab Spring. Previous research has examined the translation of Arabic literary works, including classical and contemporary novels. However, the specific challenges of translating Arab Spring novels, which are rooted in the political and social upheavals of the time, have received less attention (Bakker, 2021). This paper seeks to address this gap, providing a focused analysis of how *The Queue* and *Season of Martyrdom* were selected and translated for an English audience. Dystopian fiction is a relatively new genre in Arabic literature, emerging in response to events like the Arab Spring. Qutait (2020) suggests that the linguistic features and cultural transfer in dystopian fiction reveal the status of Arabic literature in English translation. The rise of religious and political discourse has influenced Arabic science fiction, as seen in Basma Abdelaziz's *The Queue*, which reflects the interplay of place and power (Elmeligi, 2021). The Arab Spring—a series of uprisings in countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria in 2011—prompted a shift from realism to surrealist dystopian fiction (Bakker, 2021), capturing the chaos and

frustration of people living under oppressive regimes. This trend is now prominent in Egyptian literature, using dystopian narratives to highlight political and social turmoil (Bakker, 2021). Mohamed (2021) notes that scholars are exploring how these works help interpret the sociopolitical changes brought about by the Arab Spring. Understanding Western perceptions of these Arabic novels is crucial, as the Arab Spring not only altered the political landscape but also inspired a new wave of cultural expression in literature and the arts. Nazemian and Bayati (2019) argue that Jamal Naji through his novels depicted the cotemporary social structure in Jordan in which he por-trays the corruption and the violence towards women. However, the novel describes the period of Jordanian culture and history which encompasses social and political changes due to Arab Spring consequences. Jamal Naji employed multiple voices in his novel, Mawsim alhoryat to reflect the ideological shifts among people in Jordan in Arab Spring. This novel was translated by Paula Haydar who has translated several novels from Arabic to English language. She was shortlisted for different Arabic translation prizes. 'Seasons of Martyrdom is written by Jamal Naji who is considered one of the great Jordanian novelists and short story writers. His novels depict social mobility, the hierarchies in Jordanian society, real life situations represented in Jordanian colloquial dialects and many other devices signaling Jordanian social norms and traditions like proverbs and cultural references. He wrote a dozen of novels and short story collections and published his work in well-known publishing houses in the Arab World.

The Queue novel was written by the Egyptian writer, Basma Abdulaziz in 2013 and translated by Elisabeth Jaquette in 2016. It is classified under the novels of post Arab Spring events. This novel has been reviewed in different websites in which reviewers describe it as dystopian literary text, and it resembles works such George Orwell's *1984* and Franz Kafka's *The rial*. *Providing a review for this novel in NPR website*, Machado (2016) remarks that *The Queue* novel presents a new genre of communal absurdity where are the Egyptian citizens are abandoned and desperate struggling against a government which is described as sinister and opaque. This novel attempt to depict the political unrest as a real-life analog in which cultural and social information are provided. This novel can be considered as an effective critique of authoritarianism.

Season of Martyrdom is written by Jamal Naji who is considered one of the great Jordanian novelists and short story writers. His novels depict social mobility, the hierarchies in Jordanian society, real life situations represented in Jordanian colloquial dialects and many other devices signaling Jordanian social norms and traditions like proverbs and cultural references. He wrote a dozen of novels and short story collections and published his work in well-known publishing houses in the Arab World. Moqattash,(2017) argues that Jordanian cultural identity is very clear in Naji's novel represented in the existence of Ammani geographical expressions which demands the translators to recognize that such expressions are rooted in Jordanian culture. The actions of the novel 'What Price Paradise?' translated sometimes as 'In the Hope of Virgins' take place in the Jordanian capital (Amman) and other cities outside Jordan during the period of Arab Spring, the time of national demonstrations and uneasiness against some Arab leaders' regimes.

This paper draws upon several key translation theories that inform the translation process for politically charged Arabic texts. In 1978, Itamar Even-Zohar revolutionized the study of translation with his seminal work *The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem*, redefining translations as complex sociolinguistic and cultural

phenomena. His polysystem theory situates literary systems within a broader matrix of political, economic, and social contexts, emphasizing the pivotal role of translated literature in facilitating and shaping intercultural exchanges. Preliminary norms as proposed by Toury (2012) refer to the directness of translation and translation policies that direct the translation of Arabic novels in general to English and by extension the selected novel of the current study, the *Queue* novel translated to English language. In terms of translation directness, Toury (2012, p. 82) remarks that there are circumstances in which translation from one specific language and culture is permitted and tolerated whereas prohibited to translate from specific languages in which all the process of translation is constrained by translation norms of the receiving language. Translation policy as one variable of preliminary norms decides which types of texts and genre needed by the TL and culture for translation.

Translation policy, according to Toury (2012, p. 82), refers to the principles that determine which translated texts are chosen within category of preliminary norms that control the translation process. As a category under the preliminary norms, directness of translation is related to the tolerance of translation from specific language by mediating or indirect way of translation. Toury (2012) wonders whether mediating in translation is visible or invisible. Translating novels like the *Queue* and *Season of Martyrdom* is a real challenge in which translators work as cultural mediators not merely between linguistic systems, but also between two different cultures. Thus, translators should fully understand the culture of both texts and work very hard to render the cultural expression equivalently (Jaquette, 2018). These novels are loaded with cultural references and selected to investigate the translation norms that may regulate its translation. Therefore, it is of significance to describe the way translators culturally represent other nations, power relations and identity issues, and how ideologically interfere in the final product of the translated literary texts to achieve certain purposes. To put it differently, one needs to examine the preliminary norms that prevail in translating Arabic contemporary novels and what are the norms that may regulate the process of translating such novels which are replete with cultural loads.

In addition to the translation theories previously discussed—Toury's Translation Norms—this paper draws on paratextual theory as introduced by Gérard Genette. Paratexts refer to the elements that surround a text, such as the title, cover, blurb, translator's note, and publisher's description. These components shape a reader's reception of the text and play a significant role in the selection process for translation. When considering Arab Spring novels, paratextual elements may emphasize the novels' socio-political relevance, cultural context, and global resonance, affecting their likelihood of being chosen for translation. Wolf (2006) distinguishes two types of paratextual materials: authorized and unauthorized. Authorized paratextual resources are the framing methods used by the original text's author. Unauthorized paratextual materials are framing mechanisms added by others, especially translators, to the framed original text. The concluding findings of the research provide a more in-depth understanding of translational initial norms that can serve as an instructional framework for translation trainees and beginner translators. Gérard Genette (1997:1) coined the word "paratext" and described it as "what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more broadly, to the public" (1997:1). Paratexts, whether located inside or outside the book, aid in the delicate mediation between the book, author, publisher, and reader (Genette 1997:2). Paratexts include title pages, covers, forewords, blurbs, and

other information. According to Genette (1997:405), a translated text should be regarded as a component of the paratext of its original text, and translation should be regarded as a faithful portrayal of the source text. This viewpoint, however, contradicts the dominant perspectives in translation studies, which regard translation as a creative rewriting process (Lefevere 2016). Beyond textual analysis, the paratextual components of the Queue novel portrayed in the cover pages and reviews of the cultural and verbal content can shed light on the primary purposes of selecting and translating the Queue to English.

In examining English translations of modern Arabic fiction through the lens of contemporary translation theory, Alkharashi (2016) conducted a study on *The Yacoubian Building* by Alaa Al- Aswani, focusing on its cultural and literary significance. The study highlights the importance of translation theories that reveal the social role of translators, which can significantly impact the dissemination of the final work. In a different approach, Ettobi (2015) analyzed the orality present in two postcolonial Arabic novels, *Al-Kubz Al-Hafi* by Muhammad Shukri and *Awlad Hartina* by Naguib Mahfouz. This study revealed that translators' choices reflected a range of linguistic, artistic, cultural, and ideological challenges, as well as the broader translation norms that guide the process and lead to varied interpretations. Similarly, Al-Fouzan (2019) investigates the norms governing the translation of children's literature from English to Arabic, using *Tom Sawyer* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as case studies. This research emphasizes the cultural norms influencing the Arabic translations of originally English children's books, exploring the strategies of foreignization and domestication employed to adapt culturally specific elements. It also considers the relationships between the original author, the translation, and both intended and unintended audiences, addressing the polysystem issue and asserting that various related systems affect literary translation. Additionally, Alblooshi (2021) explored the role of paratextual elements in the reception of Arabic novels translated into English, with a specific focus on dystopian narratives emerging from the Arab Spring. This research is distinctive in its examination of the preliminary norms of translation and selection, alongside the influence of paratextual elements on target readers.

METHOD

This paper employs a visual and paratextual analysis of the original Arabic and translated English versions of *The Queue* and *Season of Martyrdom*. By examining the covers, titles, and accompanying paratextual elements (e.g., blurbs, translator's notes), the paper explores how these elements reflect the socio-political themes of the novels and contribute to their selection for translation. This paper adopts a case study approach to analyze the translation of *The Queue* and *What Price Paradise*. I begin the analysis by outlining the various trends and key players involved in translating Arabic literature. Next, I introduce relevant translation theories as the analytical framework and critical approach for the study. To illustrate these shifts, I present a case study featuring the novels *The Queue* and *The Season of Martyrdom* along with their reception in English-speaking media. Data is collected from three key sources: Interviews with translators discussing their experiences, published in literary forums, blogs, and magazines. The English translation of the work itself. Reviews, literary commentaries, and blurbs from literary and news publications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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Preliminary Norms And Paratext Analysis Of The Queue Novel

Paratextual analysis, as an "instrument of adaptation" (Genette 1997: 408), plays a crucial role in understanding the novel *Queue*, particularly in relation to Gideon Toury's (2012) concept of preliminary norms. *The Queue (Ataboor)* by Basma Abdulaziz in 2013 and translated by Elisabeth Jaquette in 2016 has been selected to represent translation shifts and cultural norms of translating cultural references in contemporary Arabic novels. The Arabic version of this novel, الطابور was first published by Dar Altanweer, Cairo in 2013. It includes four chapters and 252 pages. The English translated version was first published by Melville House Publishing in 2016 and translated by Elisabeth Jaquette. Paratexts—such as the title, cover design, foreword, and reviews—frame the narrative within its socio-cultural context, influencing how readers perceive and engage with the text. For instance, the title *Queue* evokes themes of waiting and societal dynamics, while a foreword may provide critical insights into the cultural background of the narrative. Toury's preliminary norms—comprising translation policy, selection norms, and evaluation norms—further shape the translation process and its reception, guiding translators in their decisions regarding fidelity to the source text versus cultural adaptation. Together, these paratextual elements and preliminary norms illuminate how *Queue* is interpreted and valued in different cultural settings, revealing the intricate dynamics of cross-cultural communication and the evolution of meaning through translation.

Translators' Prefaces In The Queue Novel

Translators' prefaces not only serve as an introduction to the translated work but also function as a critical lens through which readers can understand the nuances of cross-cultural communication (Khan et al., 2020; Kumar & Supriyatno, 2021). By elucidating the intricacies of the source text, translators can highlight cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and thematic elements that may not be immediately apparent to the target audience. This context not only enriches the reader's experience but also fosters greater appreciation for the source culture. Furthermore, the decisions made in crafting these prefaces can reflect broader trends in translation theory and practice, such as the translator's ideology or the market demands of the publishing industry. Ultimately, these prefaces play a pivotal role in bridging cultural gaps and shaping the reception of translated literature. Elisabeth Jaquette's decision not to include a translator's preface at the outset of the English translation of *The Queue*, originally titled *Attaboor* in Arabic, indicates a deliberate choice to maintain a sense of invisibility in her role. By omitting this introductory commentary, Jaquette allows the text to resonate independently with the reader, without the influence of her perspective as a translator. This approach underscores her intention to foreground the author's voice and the cultural nuances of the original work, enabling the narrative to speak for itself. Such a choice may enhance the reader's immersion in the story, inviting them to engage directly with the text and its themes without the mediation of the translator's interpretation.

The Title Of The Queue As Paratextual Element

The title *The Queue*, derived from the Arabic term *Attaboor* (الطابور), exemplifies a literal translation that preserves the original meaning but potentially diminishes the metaphorical depth inherent in the source language. This decision reflects a broader trend

in the translation of Arab Spring novels, where titles often prioritize direct equivalence over cultural nuance. While such a strategy can ensure clarity, it may also limit the reader's engagement with the text's thematic richness and social commentary. In the context of paratextual analysis, the title serves as a crucial entry point for readers, shaping their initial perceptions and expectations of the narrative. A title that captures the metaphorical significance of the original can enrich the reader's understanding and appreciation of the underlying issues presented in the work. Conversely, a straightforward translation may render the text more accessible but at the cost of losing important cultural connotations. The translation of titles in Arab Spring novels, therefore, significantly affects their reception in the English-speaking world. Titles that maintain a strong connection to the source culture can spark curiosity and invite deeper exploration of the themes, while those that lean towards literalism may result in a more superficial understanding. This dynamic underscores the importance of considering how translation choices, particularly in paratextual elements like titles, can influence the overall impact of literary works in cross-cultural contexts.

The Cover Of The Queue Novel

The cover of *The Queue* novel in Arabic as the source text (2013) bears consideration as the visual paratext of this translated novel (see Figure 1.1). According to Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2020) image analysis methodology, the cover can be divided into top and bottom using a horizontal axis. The top of the Arabic cover features a spider web with specific significance that represents individuals soliciting the Gate, which represents the authoritarian authority, for assistance. Therefore, the top part of the cover gives an ideal picture of the protagonist of the novel, who stands in for the Gate or the government, a totalitarian regime that interferes in every single activity of people. The elements at the bottom, which represent individuals arriving for various reasons, contrast with such a dystopian image.

Figure 1. The Source Text Cover

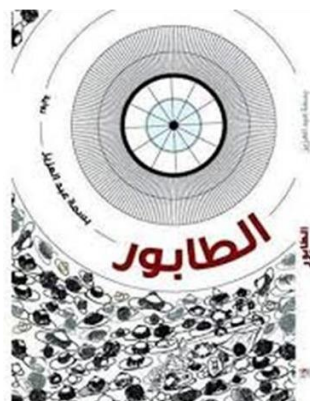
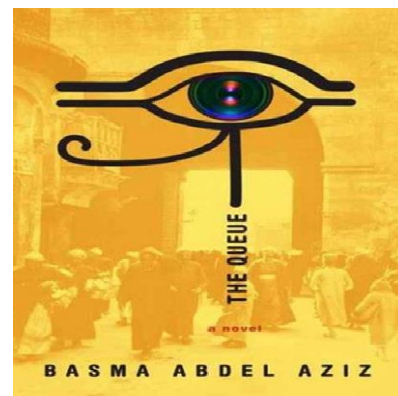


Figure 2. Target Text Cover Of The Queue



In Abdel-Aziz's amusing and lighthearted tale, people are portrayed on the cover page of the *Queue* novel standing interminably in line for a mysterious gate that dispenses stern instructions. The gate, on the other hand, never opens, indicating impenetrable and secret authority with enormous power over people. On the target text cover as shown in figure 1.2, there is a big eye, reminiscent of *Big Brother is Watching You*. The blue eye symbolizes the activity of the government during the citizen's uprisings in which people queue in lines waiting for the gate to open and fulfill their needs. Unfortunately, the open

will never open. According to Machado (2016), *The Queue* novel presents a new genre of communal absurdity where the Egyptian citizens are abandoned and desperate struggling against a government which is described as sinister and opaque. This novel attempt to depict the political unrest as a real-life analog in which cultural and social information are provided. This novel can be considered as an effective critique of authoritarianism. The cover of the book titled "الطابور" (translated as "The Queue") by Basma Abdel Aziz presents a visually striking design that invites intrigue and contemplation. The prominent circular pattern at the center draws the eye, symbolizing focus and the cyclical nature of waiting or societal processes. The use of black and white contrasts sharply with the red title, creating a bold visual impact that conveys urgency and importance. The intricate details within the circular pattern may represent the complexity of human experiences within the context of a queue, suggesting themes of patience, frustration, and the passage of time. The black-and-white color scheme can evoke feelings of starkness or simplicity, possibly alluding to themes of oppression or conformity often found in narratives addressing societal issues. The scattered, almost chaotic elements surrounding the central design may symbolize the diverse individuals caught in the system, emphasizing the collective experience of waiting and the emotional weight that it carries. Overall, the cover art effectively encapsulates the thematic essence of the book, drawing readers into a narrative that likely explores profound reflections on identity, society, and the human condition in the face of systemic challenges. *The Queue* has several textual materials that do not appear in the English version in terms of verbal paratexts. These verbal paratexts not only provide context for the translated text, but they also elicit specific emotions in readers before they begin reading the text, as shown below. The translator has not supplied an introduction to the translated material.

This novel depicts Egyptian sociopolitical circumstances. However, according to Jaquette (2018), the *Queue's* translator, one of the many reasons for choosing the *Queue* for translation is because it has explicit references to historical and sociopolitical features of Egypt depicted in the Dystopian narratives. Translation, according to Jaquette, is a difficult mediating practice in which there is an interaction between the original language and the language in translation; between the author's intention in the margins and their words on the page; and between a reader familiar with the context and one who isn't. However, the inclusion of cultural idioms that the target readerships may not grasp complicates the work of translating Arabic books. As a result, Jaquette notices that when translating the *Queue's* content using translation procedures like inclusion and exclusion, the author's intended thought is vital to the translator.

The Translator's Note

Jaquette compensates for the absence of a translator's preface by providing notes at the end of the target text. These notes are designed to enhance the reader's understanding of the connotations and cultural significance embedded within the narrative of *The Queue*. By including this supplementary material, Jaquette offers valuable insights into the cultural references and nuances that may not be immediately accessible to the English-speaking audience. This strategy not only aids in comprehending the complexities of the original text but also enriches the overall reading experience, ensuring that the cultural richness of *Attaboor* is effectively conveyed.

Preliminary Norms And Paratext Analysis Of The Season Of Martyrdom Novel

Paratextual analysis, seen as an "instrument of adaptation" (Genette 1997: 408), is crucial for interpreting *The Season of Martyrdom* in light of Gideon Toury's (2012) preliminary norms. Paratexts, such as the title, cover design, and foreword, shape reader engagement and understanding by framing themes of sacrifice and socio-political struggle. The title itself signals significant issues, while the foreword provides context regarding the author's intentions. Toury's preliminary norms—encompassing translation policy, selection norms, and evaluation norms—guide translators in balancing fidelity to the source text with necessary cultural adaptations. Together, these elements illuminate how *The Season of Martyrdom* is perceived across different cultures, highlighting the complexities of cross-cultural communication and the evolving meanings attributed to the text in discussions of identity and resistance.

Translators' Prefaces In The Seasons Of Martyrdom

Translators' prefaces not only serve as an introduction to the translated work but also function as a critical lens through which readers can understand the nuances of cross-cultural communication. By elucidating the intricacies of the source text, translators can highlight cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and thematic elements that may not be immediately apparent to the target audience. This context not only enriches the reader's experience but also fosters greater appreciation for the source culture. Furthermore, the decisions made in crafting these prefaces can reflect broader trends in translation theory and practice, such as the translator's ideology or the market demands of the publishing industry. Ultimately, these prefaces play a pivotal role in bridging cultural gaps and shaping the reception of translated literature.

Title Manipulation Of The Seasons Of Martyrdom

The title "موسم الحوريات," translated as "The Season of the Sirens," intrigues with its evocative connotations of allure, temptation, and the supernatural, suggesting a narrative rich in emotional and thematic complexity. The inclusion of the author's name is essential for establishing credibility and may resonate with readers familiar with their previous works, piquing interest. The vibrant colors of blue and yellow employed in the design evoke feelings of energy and optimism, contrasting with the dark, smoky texture that occupies the center, which may symbolize conflict or struggle. This color dynamic could reflect the narrative's exploration of sociopolitical issues, particularly in the context of the Arab Spring or societal transformations in the Arab world. The smoky background introduces an element of mystery, suggesting underlying chaos and emotional turmoil present within the story. Furthermore, the bold and impactful font choice for the title ensures it captures attention and remains easily readable, conveying confidence in the narrative's themes. The prominent placement of the title as the focal point, coupled with the author's name situated below, creates a clear visual hierarchy. The influence of such a cover page on readers engaging with translated Arab Spring literature is significant. It not only serves to attract attention but also sets the tone for a deeper exploration of the socio-political landscape that defines this body of work. By visually encapsulating themes of identity and conflict, the cover invites readers to reflect on the broader implications of societal change in the Arab world. This can create an immediate connection for readers, encouraging them to approach the narrative with an understanding of the historical and cultural contexts that underpin it. As such, the cover page becomes a gateway, framing

the reading experience and prompting readers to consider how the allure of the sirens—symbolizing both temptation and danger—might parallel the challenges faced in navigating the complexities of contemporary Arab society.

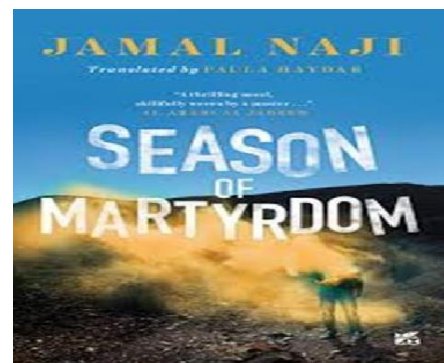
The Cover Page Of The Seasons Of Martyrdom

The cover for "Season of Martyrdom" by Jamal Naji presents a striking visual that complements the themes of the narrative. The image, featuring a vast, open landscape under a sky of gradient blues, evokes a sense of both freedom and desolation, resonating with the emotional weight often found in literature addressing sociopolitical struggles. The use of a bold, white font for the title emphasizes the urgency and gravity of the subject matter, immediately drawing the reader's attention. This cover effectively communicates the sense of turmoil and longing for change that characterizes narratives surrounding the Arab Spring. The visual elements combined with the title suggest a poignant exploration of martyrdom and sacrifice, inviting readers to engage deeply with the themes of identity, conflict, and societal upheaval. For readers of translated Arab Spring literature, such imagery serves as a powerful introduction, setting the stage for an impactful reading experience that reflects both the personal and collective struggles faced within that historical context. The color palette of the cover for "Season of Martyrdom" is pivotal in conveying the narrative's emotional and thematic depth. The shades of blue in the sky evoke feelings of calmness and hope, symbolizing freedom and the vast possibilities ahead, while lighter tones suggest optimism and a yearning for peace. In contrast, the earthy tones, if present, ground the story in cultural heritage, reflecting the characters' connection to their land and enhancing the authenticity of their struggles. The introduction of smoky gray elements adds ambiguity and chaos, signifying conflict and emotional turmoil, thereby suggesting the darker themes woven throughout the narrative. The interplay of bright colors against darker tones creates visual tension that mirrors the story's inherent conflict, inviting readers to explore the coexistence of hope and despair, freedom and oppression. Ultimately, this careful combination of colors not only enhances the cover's visual appeal but also deepens the reader's engagement with the complex issues of identity and societal change that define the Arab Spring experience.

Figure 3. Source text Cover Jamal Naji's Novel



Figure 4. Target Text



In both novels, the translator's note plays a crucial role in guiding the reader's understanding of the cultural and political context. In *The Queue*, the translator doesn't provide a note at the beginning of the target text, however she provides a glossary of the cultural words in the novel that may puts the readers in a challenging situation relating to

understanding. explains key cultural references and political allusions, ensuring that English readers grasp the underlying messages without losing the novel's original meaning. Similarly, the translator's note in *What Price Paradise* provides historical and political context about the Arab Spring, framing the novel as a culturally and politically significant work that extends beyond the Arab world.

Comparative Discussion Of Visual And Paratextual Norms

Both *The Queue* by Basma Abdel Aziz and *Seasons of Martyrdom* by Jamal Naji effectively employ visual and paratextual elements to influence their selection and reception in translation. Notably, neither novel includes a translator's preface; however, both feature translator's notes at the end, which aim to facilitate the reader's understanding of the cultural contexts and complexities embedded in the narratives. The cover for *Seasons of Martyrdom* presents a striking visual that complements the narrative's themes. The image showcases a vast, open landscape under a gradient blue sky, evoking feelings of both freedom and desolation. This duality resonates with the emotional weight found in literature addressing sociopolitical struggles. The bold white font for the title underscores the urgency and gravity of the subject matter, immediately capturing the reader's attention. Collectively, these visual elements communicate the turmoil and longing for change that characterize narratives related to the Arab Spring, inviting readers to engage deeply with themes of martyrdom, sacrifice, identity, conflict, and societal upheaval. In contrast, the cover of *The Queue* employs a more whimsical yet thought-provoking approach. It depicts individuals standing interminably in line for a mysterious gate that dispenses stern instructions, which remains perpetually closed.

This imagery conveys a sense of impenetrable authority, symbolized by a prominent eye reminiscent of "Big Brother is Watching You." This blue eye represents government surveillance during citizens' uprisings, emphasizing the futility of their wait for the gate to open and fulfill their needs. As noted by Machado (2016), *The Queue* encapsulates a new genre of communal absurdity, portraying Egyptian citizens as abandoned and desperate in their struggle against a sinister and opaque government. The novel serves as a poignant critique of authoritarianism, depicting political unrest through a lens of cultural and social realism. The cover design for *The Queue* is visually compelling and invites contemplation. A prominent circular pattern at the center symbolizes focus and the cyclical nature of waiting and societal processes. The stark black and white contrast with the red title creates a bold visual impact, conveying urgency and significance.

The intricate details within the circular design may reflect the complexities of human experiences associated with waiting, suggesting themes of patience, frustration, and the passage of time. The black-and-white color scheme evokes feelings of starkness, possibly alluding to themes of oppression or conformity found in narratives addressing societal issues. The chaotic elements surrounding the central design symbolize the diverse individuals caught in the system, emphasizing the collective emotional weight of their experience. In terms of verbal paratexts, *The Queue* contains several textual elements that do not appear in the English version. The covers and blurbs are carefully crafted to appeal to English-speaking audiences, balancing cultural specificity with universal themes. This strategic packaging plays a crucial role in determining which novels are chosen for translation, as publishers aim to select works that resonate aesthetically and thematically with international readers. Overall, the analysis illustrates that visual presentation and

paratextual elements are significant factors in the selection process for translating Arab Spring novels. Publishers and translators employ these cues to enhance accessibility and appeal to a global audience while preserving the core cultural and political messages of the works. This approach aligns with broader trends in global publishing, where novels with strong visual and thematic appeal are more likely to be selected for translation.

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