

From the Red Keep to Winterfell: Translating Toponyms in High Fantasy Literature from English into Arabic

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Abstract: The recent popularity of the fantasy genre in the Arabic world has seen increased translation activity into Arabic (De Blasio 2019). Despite this interest, scholars have focused their attention on low fantasy, with little attention to high fantasy. This study investigates book five of George R.R Martin's novel series "A Dance with Dragons (2011), and its Arabic translation *رقصة مع التنانين* *raqsa m' ?ltanani:n* (2020) with a specific focus on Toponyms. The study uses textual analysis of the translation of book five of the novel series to determine the translation procedures used, and interviews with the official translator to understand the factors behind the translation choices in the series. The study adopts Aixelá's 1996 model of culture-specific items (CSI) for the classification of the translation procedures. The results indicate the prevalence of two main translation procedures; conservation and substitution. The two procedures are used to strike a balance between the readability of the text, readers' expectations, and maintaining the fantasy of the secondary world in which the narrative takes place.

Keywords: Arabic, high fantasy, literary translation; toponyms; translation

1. Introduction

As a western literary genre, Fantasy established itself in the 19th and 20th centuries through authors such as Tolkien, Rowling, and Martin (De Blasio 2019). Growing western influence in the Middle East and the distribution of literary works via different media have witnessed interest in the genre rise in the Arab world (De Blasio 2019). Despite this interest, and the genre's increased popularity and prevalence in pop culture, little research has investigated the translation of these works into Arabic. Arabic translations have focused on issues such as media translation challenges (Hamdan, Naser and Hamdan 2021) and literary translation challenges that result from "the ideological and cultural values and norms of the target culture/s" (Yousef 2012: 56), the translation of children literature (Al-Jabri 2020) or the translation of metaphor and allusions in literature (Albakry 2005). As for Arabic scholarship focus on the literary genre of fantasy, the attention has largely been directed at low fantasy (Mdallel 2003; Mussche and Willems 2010; Al Hadithy 2012), and has neglected high fantasy. This study explores high fantasy with a special focus on toponyms. Toponyms are a subcategory of onomastics, the science that studies personal and place names (Crystal 1997). The naming of toponyms is usually driven by "the desire to identify a place and thus distinguish it from others" (Stewart 1954: 1). Toponyms can be descriptive, possessive,

incidental, commemorative, euphemistic, manufactured, mistake names, shift name to folk etymology (Stewart 1954). The variety of toponyms in a source text (ST) is bound to pose translation challenges to be navigated and overcome.

Fantasy texts pose further challenges to translators as fantasy authors enjoy an unparalleled level of freedom in creating their worlds and constructing their narratives (Algeo 2001). The wide variety of name classifications and categories has generated different views on their translation. Vendler, for example, argues that proper names, those denoting a person or a thing, “do not require translation into another language” (1975: 117) and can be simply rendered via transference. Other scholars argue that names require careful consideration (Tymoczko 1999; Nord 2003; Fernandes 2006). This study takes a similar view to the latter. In Fantasy literature, toponyms play a significant role in the creation of the worlds and in the narrative. Their translations, similarly, require careful attention. This study examines the translation of toponyms, in book five of the series of *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin, in two ways; via in-depth interviews with the translator, to understand the rationale and factors influencing his translation decisions, and via textual analysis of the toponyms in the dataset. The study draws on descriptive translation studies (DTS) by examining both the process and product of translation (Toury 1995).

The study also provides new insight into Arab literary translators' decision-making process. TS has constantly advocated examining the product of translation as well as investigating the “why, how and who translates” (Lefevere 1992: 10). Arab literary translators remain an invisible group of translators as evidenced by the lack of studies investigating their decision-making process. Studies as the one in hand can contribute to larger debates on translator visibility, patronage, agency and decision-making processes (Lefevere 1992). It also provides Arab literary translators, practitioners and scholars with techniques and recommendations on how to handle toponyms in fantasy literature translation.

1.1 The fantasy genre

Although the fantasy genre does not yield itself to a simple definition, there is consensus on its main characteristic in constructing the impossible (Todorov 1973; Irwin 1976; Jackson 1981; James and Mendlesohn 2012). It is generally divided into high and low fantasy, depending on where the narrative takes place (Tymn, Zahorski, and Boyer 1979; James and Mendlesohn 2002). In low fantasy, such as J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*, a story may take place wholly or partially in our world, otherwise known as the primary world. High fantasy narratives take place in a secondary, invented, fictional world, such as the case in George R.R. Martin's novels (Vike 2009). The creation of a believable fantasy world with its geography and locations and by extension, the toponyms associated with them is central to high fantasy narrative (Tolkien 1974). Scholars argue that fantasy is perhaps “the richest of all genres” (Algeo 2001: 252) as fantasy writers enjoy unparalleled freedom that extends to every aspect of the narrative “those of characters, places, objects, events, and so on” (Algeo 2001: 252).

Fantasy writers' world-building objectives require a delicate balance between creating exotic worlds for their readers and keeping the world "believable enough that they can and want to immerse themselves in it" (Kennedy 2016: 99). Additionally, the language in fantasy "must be different enough from the reader's ordinary language to suggest otherness, but near enough to still be understood" (Mandala 2010: 30). As this is the case with the ST, a similar argument can be extended to encompass the translation of fantasy works into a target language (TL). The readers of the translated work might be twice removed from the original work. First in the creation of this exotic world, which might be very different from the target text (TT) audience, and again in the translation of words that might be also completely new (Bednarska 2015). The following section provides a short review on TS's treatment of names.

1.2 Names in translation studies

TS categorises names as Culture Specific Items (CSIs), despite the lack of a concrete definition of the term (Aixelá 1996). Various TS views, models and translations of CSIs exist (Newmark 1988; Hermans 1988; Aixelá 1996; Tymoczko 1999; Nord 2003; Davies 2003; Fernandes 2006). These CSI models have contributed to TS scholarship significantly in the past years as they provided different categorisations of CSIs, and allowed investigations of the translation of literary works across different language pairs, genres and cultures (Shokri and Saeed 2015; Janaviciene 2016; Dukmak, 2012; Alharbi 2017). They have also provided translators with various techniques to approach CSIs when rendering literary works.

One of the most well-known models is Newmark (1988) which distinguishes between proper names, historical institutional names, national and international institutional terms, and cultural terms. Newmark's CSI model suggests several translation techniques including glossaries, recognised and partial translation for rendition from one language to another. Another model is that of Aixelá (1996) which highlights various factors that can affect translation choices. The model proposes two categorisations of techniques; conservation, where repetition, orthographic adaptation, linguistic (non-cultural) translation, extra-textual and intra-textual gloss are listed. The second category is substitution which includes synonymy, limited and absolute universalisation, naturalisation, deletion, and autonomous creation (Aixelá 1996). Davies (2003) attempts to address the issues she finds problematic in Aixelá's model. According to Davies, Aixelá's model is problematic in that it views all names as CSIs and differentiates between conventional proper nouns and loaded names. While the first group of names "tend[s] to be preserved in translation", the second type "tend[s] to be given a linguistic translation" (Davies 2003: 71). Davies (2003) argues that not all the proper names are considered CSI. Some are "intercultural" which means that they are common between cultures. The other type, according to Davies, is "acultural", in that it does not belong to any culture or language. Accordingly, Davies' model includes the procedures of preservation, addition, omission, globalisation, localisation, transformation and creation.

TS's treatment of names has also driven debate within the literature. Hermans (1988), for example, distinguishes between a "single, concrete referent" and names with "semantic load which takes them 'beyond the singular mode of signification'" (1988: 12). For Hermans, semantically loaded names range between the suggestive to the clearly expressive and can be translated via copying, substitution, transliteration, and translation (1988). Similar to Tymoczko (1999) and Nord (2003), scholars like Fernandes (2006) warned against underestimating names in translation, and argue that they "convey semantic, social, semiotic and sound symbolic meaning(s) directly from the writer to the reader" (2006: 46). Fernandes' CSI model relies on parallel corpus analysis from English to Portuguese on the Harry Potter series and includes ten procedures: rendition, copy, transcription, substitution, recreation, deletion, addition, transposition, phonological replacement, and conventionality. This study adopts Fernandes' definition of names in that they identify a name of a place, animal, person, or thing (2006). As this study focuses on place names, these will be called toponyms throughout. The following section provides a short review of related studies on the translation of names in fantasy literature.

2. Literature review

A few studies examined proper nouns and low fantasy translation. Al-Hamly and Farghal (2015) investigated 447 proper nouns' translations in the novel *The White Tiger* via analysis of nouns' internal syntactic and thematic types. The study found that proper nouns don't have a uniform translation strategy, and that several factors affect the translators' decision including the type of the proper noun, and the degree of "comprehensibility and naturalness" of the translators' work (Al-Hamly and Farghal 2015:511). They contend that proper nouns' grammatical variation hinders the use of a uniform translation strategy. Aside from describing the translation procedures, the study does not engage with the significance of the proper nouns to their context in the novel. This could be attributed to the fact that the setting takes place in the real world, and as such, many of the places are not constructed, unlike the works of high fantasy under investigation here. Dweik and Al-Sayyed (2016) investigated translating proper nouns in a training situation. The data corpus consists of student translations of 29 proper nouns divided into personal names, geographical places and institutions. The study findings confirm Al-Hamly and Farghal's findings in the lack of a common technique, but also highlight trainee deficiencies in extra-linguistic knowledge, research skills and linguistic competence.

Studies that have examined the translation of low fantasy include Sayaheen, Mahadi and Sayaheen (2019) on domestication and foreignisation in *Alice in Wonderland*. More prominently there were also studies focusing on the *Harry Potter* series (Mussche and Willems 2010; Al-Hadithy 2017; Dukmak 2012; Al-Daragi 2016; Alharbi, 2017). Dukmak's (2012) investigation of different translations of three books of the series focuses on cultural items such as names and word play. The study reveals a lack of coordination among different translators despite the work being commissioned by the same publishing house. Al-Daragi

(2016) examined the effect of deletion and omission on the translation of *Harry Potter*, and underscored the lack of professionalism in translating children's literature in the Arab world.

Mussche and Willems (2010) investigated the translation procedures of proper names and food references into Arabic, and found simplification to be the prevalent strategy in their data corpus. Al-Hadithy (2017) utilised Fernandes model (2006) to analyse the translation of book four of the *Harry Potter* series and argued that the translator is made too visible due to the extreme foreignisation of the TT. Alharbi's (2017) eclectic analysis model was adopted from Newmark and Yule neologism typologies. Her findings show foreignisation as the predominant strategy for translating neologisms, while domestication as the predominant strategy for idioms.

Outside the Arab world, several studies investigated the translation of George R.R. Martin's work. For example, Bednarska (2015) examined the translation technique frequency of neologisms between different Polish and Slovene translators. Bednarska reported on three techniques; borrowing, equivalency and the creation of new neologisms in the TT. Kovács (2016) advocated using idioms from the series for English to Hungarian translator training, while Murugova and Pustovetova (2017) examined toponym treatment in the Russian language and highlighted the toponyms' role in the narrative and in the construction of the world of fantasy. A point long advocated by onomastics scholars since toponyms allow readers to delve into the fantasy world with confidence (Algeo 1985). This study will explore the translation techniques used in rendering such toponyms into Arabic.

This brief review has shown that despite the increased interest in the treatment of CSIs in Arabic Translation Studies (ATS) in fiction and low fantasy, there are no studies that have investigated the translation of toponyms in high fantasy literature. The present study addresses this issue. In addition, the present study engages with the translator of the novel series via in-depth interviews to gain a better understanding of the procedures, factors and challenges that he encountered during the process of translation of such a long literary work. In so doing, the present study contributes to the ongoing debates in TS on the product and process of translation (Toury 1995). The next section describes the data collection and analysis procedures.

3. Methodology

3.1 Corpus of the study

The investigation of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, specifically book five *A Dance with Dragons*, is driven by a number of reasons. *A Song of Ice and Fire* consists of seven novels, five of which have been published so far, and the series received unprecedented international attention. It has been translated to many languages and sold millions of copies worldwide (Chau and Vanderwees 2019). The series is an epic fantasy that revolves around the quest for power between a number of dynastic families to control the continent of Westeros, while having to battle supernatural creatures that threaten their existence. To construct this fantastic world, Martin

creates entire new regions, cities and geographical locations, which, in turn, introduce new and unfamiliar toponyms to the reader. The series has been adapted to TV into the “*Game of Thrones*” series and has garnered a wide international following (Chau and Vanderwees 2019). Similarly, in the Arab world, fantasy genre enthusiasts have followed the series closely, and copious web pages were dedicated to it. A simple Google search in Arabic yields around 1,000,000 search results.

The interest in the series resulted in the publication of the only authorised translation of the novels via *Dar Al-Tanweer* publishing house, which was translated by Hesham Fahmi, a well-known translator in the Arab world with translations of works such as *Frankenstein*, *Coraline*, *Cersi*, and others. Book one’s translation was published in 2015, and book five in 2020. To date, Fahmi is the sole translator of the series, and is expected to translate the rest.

Choosing book five was based on the interviews with the translator, who viewed it as his most mature translation. He explains that there are “things I believe can be improved upon, and made better.... yes, book 5 is far superior to book 1” (Interview 2). Focus on one translator’s work was motivated by previous research that indicated lack of consistency in quality standards among translators working on the same project (Dukmak 2012), and the ability to discuss the translator’s detailed work in a project that has spanned over five years. In so doing, the study draws on DTS as the study seeks to elucidate the phenomena of translation and translating in the real world and provide general translation principles that can explain and predict the process of translation (Toury 1995).

This study combines elements of product and process-oriented research in that it examines the product of translation, via textual analysis of the product and reporting on the translation procedures used to render the fantastic into Arabic. It also engages with the process of translation by examining the translator’s reflection and decision-making process associated with his choices. The fact that the entire work was carried out by one translator allows for close investigation of the thought process during a continuous period which may not be possible with other works of fiction.

This research assumes that the translation of toponyms in fantasy literature has surpassed the norm that names of places are untranslatable due to their reference to geographical areas and locations. Thus, the researchers have assumed that the translator of *A Song of Ice and Fire* into Arabic has used other strategies along with transliteration (conservation). The translator has opted for being visual “because the text is very visual” (Interview 1) and making “the geography part of the world” (Interview 2). Accordingly, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What translation procedures did the translator of Book 5 *A Dance with Dragons* adopt in translating toponyms into Arabic?
2. To what extent was the translator consistent in translating toponyms?

To answer these questions, we adopt Aixelá’s model for translating CSIs with minor modifications for two reasons. First, the model is a grouping of “all possible strategies applied to CSIs translation” (Aixelá 1996: 60), making it adaptable to all languages. Second, it is based on “intercultural manipulation” (Aixelá 1996: 60), which leaves room for modifications and combinations of different procedures even

by the same translator for the same CSI because of the textual relevance. In addition, Aixelá's (1996) model pays attention to loaded nouns as opposed to conventional nouns. Conventional proper nouns are seen to be unmotivated for the readers since they are meaningless in themselves. In contrast, loaded proper names, being "motivated", range from "faintly 'suggestive' to overtly 'expressive'" simply because they have historical or cultural associations in the source text.

Aixelá's model consists of two main procedures; conservation and substitution with sub-procedures that range on a scale from "a lesser to a greater degree of intercultural manipulation" (1996: 61-64). Conservative sub-procedures help in maintaining the original reference, and are as follows:

1. Repetition: keeping the original reference.
2. Orthographic adaptation: This involves transcription or transliteration due to different alphabetic systems.
3. Linguistic and non-cultural translation: Choosing the closest reference to the original.
4. Extra-textual gloss: Adding explanation of the ST CSI reference in the form of footnote, a glossary, commentary, etc.
5. Intra-textual gloss: Adding explanations to the text to limit reader distraction.

As for substitution, the substitutive sub-procedures provide a closer reference to the target culture and language. This includes:

1. Synonymy: Choosing a synonym or a parallel reference that is based on stylistic grounds.
2. Limited universalisation: Providing another acceptable reference by the TT readers which originally exists in the ST language.
3. Absolute universalisation: Employing a neutral reference because there is no suitable CSI reference in the TT.
4. Naturalisation: Adding a CSI reference to the intertextual corpus of the TL culture.
5. Deletion: Prompted by the translator's judgement that the TT's CSI reference is ideologically or stylistically unacceptable.
6. Autonomous creation: Adopting a non-existent ST cultural reference.

These sub-procedures could also be merged to form new ones. Compensation, for example, could emerge from the combination of deletion and autonomous creation, and so on. The model then is flexible enough to be used with different language pairs, different cultures, and provides ample room for the use of many techniques. Prior to presenting the findings and discussing the techniques used in the data-set, the next section will describe the data collection and analysis process. The study ends with a conclusion and suggestions for further research.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

To answer the study questions, we divided the data collection into three phases. In phase one, the translator was interviewed after obtaining consent using open-ended questions. The researchers informed the translator of his rights to withdrawal and freedom to answer or decline any question. The first interview took place in July 2020. The purpose of the first interview was to provide background information on

the translator's academic and professional work, discuss the translator's role, and determine the dataset for textual analysis. As a result, book five *A Dance with Dragons* (2011), was chosen.

Phase two involved the textual analysis of book five through manual elicitation, listing and categorisation of the toponyms according to their use and referents, i.e., geographical, man-made etc., and their translations. Both researchers worked on the same editions of the ST (Martin 2012) and TT (Martin 2020). The two texts were manually compared page-by-page to check for any inconsistencies in the translation. Very minimal inconsistencies were found as will be discussed later. Toponyms translation procedures informed the questions for phase three, which included another interview with the translator to explore the reasons behind the translation techniques. The second interview followed the same procedures as interview one including consent, and right to withdrawal, and it took place in August of 2020.

Each interview lasted around an hour. They were conducted via Zoom due to geographical distance, the translator lives in Egypt, and the researchers in Jordan. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for data analysis purposes. The following findings draw on both the dataset from Book five and the translator's answers.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Toponyms classification

Textual analysis of the data yielded 3020 toponyms -with repetitions- and 472 without repetition. The following table illustrates the toponyms in the novel and the classification used for analysis purposes:

Table 1: Toponyms categorisation for analysis purposes

Toponyms	Categories	Examples	
Geography	Landmasses	Continents, lands, islands, peninsulas	Westeros, the stormlands, Bear Islands
	Waterbodies	Seas, rivers, lakes, streams, canals, bays, gulfs, shores	shivering sea, Rhoyme, Long lake, Slaver's bay, the Bite
	Natural Habitats	Woods, forests, fields and deserts	Rosewood, Haunted forest, Red Waste
	Landforms	Mountains, hills, valleys, ridges,	Velvet hills, Duskendale, Rutting meadow
Built-structures toponyms	Settlements	Settlements, cities, towns, villages,	Pennytree, Myr, Mudgrave, Honeytree, Flea Bottom
	Public Spaces	Gardens, plaza, statues, pits	Glass gardens, Plaza of punishment,
	Establishments	Banks, pubs, inns, brothels, mills, etc.	Iron Bank, Lazy Eel, Pleasure gardens

Transportation Infrastructure	Roads, bridges, ports and harbours	The Boneway, Bitterbridge, Purple Harbour
Religious Places	Temples, septs, shrines, pyramids	Baelor's Sept. Shrine of Weeping Lady
Government & ruling	Castles, palaces, halls, courts, seats	Castle Black, Red Keep, Summerhall
Military Structures	Walls, Towers, Gates, Barracks	The Wall, King's tower, Ramsgate, Crow's nest.
Miscellaneous toponyms	Tunnels, hedges, burrows etc.	Wormways, Woodehedge.

4.2 Translation procedures

Data analysis revealed two main translation procedures, namely, (i) conserving the ST orthography and sounds of the toponyms, and (ii) substitution (Aixelá 1996). These two categories are classified into subcategories. The following table illustrates these procedures, their variations, toponym numbers in each, and toponyms' percentage rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 2: Toponyms translation procedures

Procedure	Detailed procedure	No. of toponyms	Percentage
Conservation	Orthographic adaptation & Orthographic adaptation with intra-textual gloss	164	35%
Substitution (translation proper)	Literal translation & Literal translation with intra-textual gloss	242	51%
	Naturalisation	66	14%
Total		472	100%

4.2.1 Conservation

The results indicate that the first translation procedure is conserving the ST toponyms. This procedure is classified into two subcategories: (i) Orthographic adaptation which involves transcription and transliteration when the TL has a different alphabet system from the SL (Aixelá 1996), & (ii) Orthographic adaptation with intra-textual gloss where the gloss is incorporated into the text, so as not to distract the reader, and to solve ambiguities (Aixelá 1996). Out of 472 toponyms, 164 (35%) toponyms were conserved using these two techniques.

i. Orthographic adaptation: The translator conserved 164 toponyms using orthographic adaptation by itself, or coupled with intra-textual gloss. English and Arabic have different sound systems, and the translator's employment of the orthographic adaptation procedure serves two purposes: to maintain the ST toponym pronunciation, and to provide the target reader with the highest acceptable transliterated version in the TT. To this end, the translator employs two methods to preserve the foreign toponym sound system. The first is the use of Arabic

diacritics. Diacritics clarify ambiguities, and can also indicate a different part of speech in the Arabic language (Zbib and Souidi 2012). Despite this, they are not used in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) printed media, except in very formal texts. Arab readers resort to their understanding of the context to understand lexical and syntactic connections between sentence elements (Zbib and Souidi 2012). In this instance, the translator's utilisation of these diacritics helps preserve ST toponym pronunciation as illustrated below.

Table 3: Use of Arabic diacritics

ST toponyms	TT with diacritics	No diacritics	Back translation*
Lys	ليس /Li:s/	ليس / Lis/	Lais
Thenn	ثين / Thi:n/	ثن / Thin/	Thn
Snowy Sept	سبت الثلوج /Sipt ?lthu:lu:j/	سبت الثلوج /Sabt ?thu:lu:j/	Snowy Sabt

* Back translation is provided for the benefit of non-Arabic speakers

Second, the translator maintains the sounds of the ST language that do not exist in the TL. For example, the voiceless bilabial plosive sound (/p/), and the voiced labiodental fricative (/v/) are not phonemes in the Arabic sound system. Although they are not Arabic sounds, they are tackled as allophones (since allophones do not change the meaning of the word) of /b/ and /f/ with different orthography, which is a technique used consistently by the translator. The following are illustrative examples:

Table 4: Preservation of ST sounds using allophones

ST toponyms	Preserving ST sound	Arabic sound system	TT	Back translation
Sunspear	صنسبير /_Sanspiyr/	صنسبير /_Sansbyr/		Sunsbeer
Volantis	فولانتيس /_Vulantis/	فولانتيس /_Fulantis/		Folantis
Pyke	بايك /_Payk/	بايك /_Bayk/		Byke

The translator's use of Arabic diacritics, and employment of unusual phonological allophones, suggests that the translator is trying to achieve a balance between the language of the exotic ST new worlds, and that of the target world language (Kennedy 2016), which he highlights as he discusses the foreign and invented names.

In addition to those techniques, the translator is conscious of the need to indicate the visual representation of the source text when narrating in a foreign language. George R.R. Martin's novel world is made of different cultures and civilisations who converse in different languages such as Dothraki, High and low Valyrian, etc. In the source text, italics were employed to help the reader *visualise* a different language. According to the translator of the Arabic text, the use of italics in Arabic would not have been successful for the Arabic reader because it is not used in Arabic typography in general. To indicate the foreignness of those languages, the translator utilises the wide array of dialect sounds from spoken Arabic. MSA is

used in most printed media, but spoken Arabic varies enormously across the Arab world, and regional and sub-regional varieties exist (Wikipedia 2020). This is visible in the translator's treatment of the seeming allophones (since these sounds are not Arabic sounds) of the voiceless velar plosive /k/ (ك) in the novel. In MSA, the sound is pronounced similar to its English counterpart, but it has various allophones depending on the dialect used. This is further explained by the translator, who argues the need for using such variations such as, "In Ghiscari language I used another form of kaf,... which has a dot on top...so when the reader sees the words, he can feel that he is also reading a different language from a different place" (Interview 1). The following are illustrative examples:

Table 5: Visual representation of different sounds in TT

ST toponyms	Translator choice
Qarth	/ Ka:rth/ كَارْثْ
Yunkai	/ Yunkay/ يُونْكَايْ
Qohor	/ Ku:hu:r/ كُوْهُورْ

Unlike translated children's literature, where unfamiliar phonological sequences, foreign names and uncommon spelling are ill-received (Puurtinen 1995; Dukmak 2012), preserving toponyms in the TT for adult readers of high fantasy is advantageous. Toponyms augment the exotic features of the narrative (Vermes 2003), and enhance their referential memorability (Fernandes 2006). Furthermore, as readers immerse themselves in the narrative, the names which might have been strange at the beginning "may soon become quite familiar" (Davies 2003: 77). By maintaining consistency of the translation procedures through these procedures, the translator has succeeded in making the toponyms part of the reader's contextual discourse, and allowed the readers to delve confidently into the narrative (Algeo 1985).

As for the factors influencing those translation decisions, the translator highlights three. First, the majority of the cities have foreign names invented by the author, and they cannot be translated into Arabic. Examples include: Asatpor, Mereen, Yonkai, Volantis, Qarth (Interview 2). Second, the translator underscores the central role toponyms plays in conveying the exotic worlds created in "because this world is different from ours" (Interview 1). According to Tolkien:

To make a Secondary World inside which the green sun will be credible, commanding Secondary Belief, will probably require labour and thought, and will certainly demand a special skill, a kind of elvish craft. Few attempt such difficult tasks. But when they are attempted and, in any degree, accomplished then we have a rare achievement of Art: indeed narrative art, story-making in its primary and most potent mode (1974: 48-49).

Similarly, translators have to both convey this fantastic world into the TT, and maintain the readability of the text. This is evident in the translator's understanding of the role of the geography of the secondary world and their associated toponyms as he explains "...the author is using the geography of the world he created, to give

names to the places" (Interview 2). A third factor cited by the translator for using this procedure is driven by the audience of the show, and this is specific to a handful of iconic toponyms that are central to the narrative which could have been translated and not transliterated such as "Winterfell" and "High Garden":

But I admit, there are names I shouldn't have transliterated them, like Winterfell, High Garden. They shouldn't have, I should have, but if I did translate them, the show viewers would have crucified me, because these names came to bear such significance for them and the world (Interview 2).

Textual analysis and the translator's interview indicate an awareness of the need to balance the requirements of the ST and the TT readers' expectations of the text where he opts to clarify using intra-textual gloss as explained next.

ii. Orthographic adaptation with intra-textual gloss: The second procedure adopted is orthographic adaptation with intra-textual gloss, where extra information is added to explain toponyms. For example, the translator translates "Dothraki" into "بحر الدوثراكي" /Bahr ?duthra:ki/, i.e., "Dothraki Sea" even when the word "sea" is not mentioned in the ST. The following are illustrative examples:

Table 6: Orthographic adaptation with intra-textual gloss

ST	TT	Back translation
Asshai by the Shadow	أشاي الواقعة عند "بلاد الظلال" /?shay ?l-waqi'a ʿnd bilad ?THilal/	Asshai that falls by the "land of the Shadow"
Basilisks	جزر البازيليسق /Juzr ?l-Bazlisq/	The Basilisks Islands

The translator argues that there is a need to clarify the category of the place, which will, in turn, enhance the readability of the text. This mirrors a similar argument by Fernandes (2006) where intra-textual gloss helps the reader better understand the text, without much distraction. In addition, the translator contends that the text is very visual and toponyms play a central role in the building the image of the world in the ST readers' mind. Hence, clarifying these categories supports the visual image in the TT readers' mind (Interview 1). Other studies have reported on using similar procedures (Dukmak 2012). The difference between the findings in the current study and previous ones, such as Dukmak (2012) lies in the effect these procedures had on the text and the intended audience. In Dukmak, these techniques are described as source-text oriented (2012) and are viewed as a source of alienation between the text and readers, negatively impacting young Arab readers' comprehensibility and enjoyment. The translator's use of these techniques in this study suggests that it is target-text oriented where the purpose is to enhance the readability and visual imagery of the TT while maintaining the fantasy of the worlds. Further research on audience reception of the TT can provide better information on whether these techniques have been as successful as the translator contends.

4.2.2 Substitution

Toponyms that have been translated via substitution are 242. The translator utilised two techniques: (i) literal translation (51%), and (ii) naturalisation (14%), where “the translator decides to bring the CSI into the intertextual corpus felt as specific by the target language culture” (Aixelá 1996: 63).

i. Literal translation: The translator uses literal translation (Newmark 1988), and literal translation with intra-textual gloss to increase readability and comprehension of the text. It is notable that both procedures are used for toponyms that are semantically unladen (Hermans 1988), and with descriptive toponyms which have reasonably equivalent counterparts in Arabic. The following are illustrative examples:

Table 7: Examples of literal translation

ST toponyms	Literal translation	Back translation
the Last River	النهر الأخير /?nahr ?l-?khi:r/	The River last
The Broken Arm	الذراع المكسورة /?dhira ^c ?l-maksu:ra /	The Arm Broken
ST toponyms	Literal Translation with intra-textual gloss	Back translation
The Gift	اراضي الهدية /?radi ?lhadyaah/	The lands of the Gift
Sheepshead	تلال رأس الخروف /Tilal r?s ?l-kharuf/	The hills of sheepshead

The “the Last River” is translated as “النهر الأخير” /?nahr ?l-?khi:r/ which is neutral and literal and conveys the meaning of the ST toponym. This is the same with other examples such as “the long bridge”, and the “Iron Islands” which lend themselves to equivalent Arabic toponyms without much change to meaning. In addition, the translator uses literal translation with descriptive toponyms in the text such as toponyms with colours “the White harbour”, “Grey cliffs”, and easy to render adjectives such as “Drowned town”, “Happy port”. According to the translator, descriptive names are used heavily in the ST, and they help enrich the narrative. In order to provide the TT readers with the same experience, the translator maintained these toponyms when they had equivalents in Arabic as he explains, “I wanted to make geography a part of the world. As you see, places in the north have all the meanings of ice and snow and frost and so on. In the south, in the desert, places of heat and dryness and the sun and so on” (Interview 2).

This is further supported by use of literal translation with intra-textual gloss, which the translator employs to enhance the readability and comprehension of the TT. For instance, “the Gift” is translated as “اراضي الهدية” /?radi ?lhadyaah/, considering that the word “lands” is not in the ST. This is also apparent in his translation of toponyms such as “the Old Mint” into “دارسك العملة القديمة” /Dar sak ?l’umla ?lqadi:ma/ and others. Using intra-textual gloss in conjunction with orthographic adaptation, and literal translation suggests that the translator is trying to maintain a balance between the foreignness of the ST narrative and the central role toponyms play in cementing the setting of the novel, the expectations of the TT readers, and the readability of the TT text, as he explains in interview 2:

..this an implicit unwritten agreement between me, the author and the reader from the start. There are things we have to accept in order to immerse ourselves in this make-believe world and embrace its unique nature. So the text has to be coherent “متناسك” /mutamasik/ and not appear to be translated from a foreign language. It needs to sound Arabic, and this is perhaps the comment I heard most from readers, that the text feels as if it is written in Arabic.

The high fantasy genre is, by nature, fantastical, and writers of the genre enjoy unparalleled freedom in their creations (Alego 2001). The translator’s treatment of toponyms using literal translation, and literal translation with intra-textual gloss seem to have provided a good balance between the readers’ need to immerse themselves in the text, without sacrificing its readability.

ii. Naturalisation: The second procedure used is naturalisation (Axiela 1996). Toponyms translated via naturalisation are 66 or 14% of the total dataset. The following are illustrative examples:

Table 8: Examples of naturalisation

ST	TT naturalisation	Back translation
The Reach	المرعى /?l-Mar ^ˤ a: /	The grazing land
The Arbor	الكرمة /?l-karmah/	The vine
Castle of bitter bridge	جسر العلقم /Jisr ?l- ^ˤ lqam/	Colocynth Bridge

The use of naturalisation is specifically used to enhance comprehension of a number of toponyms, where any other procedure would have not been successful. A number of toponyms are named after certain events narrated in the series as the translator explains “...especially in the case of places where the author tells the story of naming that specific place, which could make no sense if the reader reads the story of the name of the place without understanding the name” (Interview 1). Thus, if the translator did not translate the name of that place, the readability and comprehensibility of the TT will be negatively affected. For instance, “the Castle of Bitterbridge” used to be “Storm Bridge”. However, in the narrative, it is named after a battle into “Bitterbridge” to reflect the surrender of the castle and the bitterness of the defeat. Although Arabic has an equivalent to the word bitter in “المرارة” /?l-mararah/, this would have not conveyed the thematically-loaded meaning. Transliteration similarly, would have been a failure. Therefore, the translator opted for “جسر العلقم” / Jisr ?l-^ˤlqam/ because it “reflects the bitterness and the name resonates well in Arabic” (Interview 1). The word “العلقم” /?l-^ˤlqam/ connotes high degrees of bitterness in Arabic, literally colocynth, an extremely bitter fruit, and provides a richer mental image for the TT reader.

Fernandes (2006) underscored the various levels that name meaning in fantasy literature carries beyond the linguistic level. According to Fernandes these include semantic, semiotic and sound symbolic levels. In this instance, “the Castle of Bitterbridge” is semantically and thematically loaded, and requires careful attention. There are many other instances in the series where toponyms carry both

a semantic and thematic load where they function to show a specific feature in the narrative like that of “Bitterbridge”.

Naturalisation is also used with toponyms with semiotic meaning. According to Fernandes (2006), the semiotic meaning of names is culturally bound, and acts like signs that create connotations that could be related to class, nationality, religious identity, intertextuality or mythology...etc. “The Reach” which is translated into the “المرعى” /ʔl-Marʕa: / is an example of a word with religious semiotic meanings. The translator explains:

...the Reach is a very lush place where there are gardens and animals...it is the most fertile in all of the seven kingdoms, but the Reach I found out, it's an old word that could be translated to "المرج" /ʔl-marj / but I opted for "المرعى" /ʔl-Marʕa: / because it expresses the nature and the animals, the slaughter animals, and naturally slaughter animals live where there is a lot of greenery (Interview 2).

The literal translation as the translator suggested is “المرج” /ʔl-marj/ which literally means (grassy area). However, the connotation of the “Reach” is far beyond a neutral grassy area, and so translating it as “المرج” /ʔl-marj/ would not have been satisfactory. The translator’s choice for the word “المرعى” /ʔl-Marʕa: / is based on a religious association of the word as it appears in the Quran, the holy Muslim book, where verses show the change that God can bring upon green pastures (87: 4-5) “وَالَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْمَرْعَىٰ فَجَعَلَهُ غُثَاءً أَحْوَىٰ” /Wal- lathi ʔkhraj ʔl-Marʕa: Fajaʕlahu ghuthaʔn ʔhwa/. The English translation of which is “and Who brings forth ‘green’ pasture. And [then] makes it black stubble” (Quran.com 2020).

4.3 Toponyms translation consistency

One of the aims of the study was to investigate toponyms’ translation consistency in the dataset. Previous studies reported inconsistencies in translation techniques (Dukmak 2012). Data analysis revealed very few inconsistencies. The only one detected was in the translation of one toponym: “Casterly rock”, one of a handful of iconic and central toponyms in the series. It is sometimes transliterated into “كاسترلي روك” /Kastrli: ruk/, and sometimes translated into “الصخرة” /ʔsakhra / “The Rock”. The remaining toponyms were translated consistently. Previous studies that compared translations across different languages of the same work argued that inconsistencies illustrate the success of the translators’ work as they “have, on the whole, been successful in calculating which adaptations will best suit the needs and tastes of their particular target audiences, while preserving the character of the original texts” (Davies 2003: 98). However, Dukmak underscored translation inconsistency and quality issues when several translators worked on the same literary text (Dukmak 2012). The translator has been consistent and attempted to maintain the balance between TT readability and ST’s fantastic narrative in which the narrative takes place as the following findings will show.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This study has investigated the translation procedures of toponyms in book five of the novel series *A Song of Ice and Fire* via textual analysis and interviews with the

official translator of the only published work in Arabic. The study revealed the use of two main procedures: conservation and substitution. Within conservation, the translator utilised orthographic adaptation with or without intra-textual gloss. The second procedure was that of substitution using literal translation, with or without intra-textual gloss and naturalisation.

Although this study concurs with findings of Dweik and Al-Sayyed (2016) and Al-Hamly and Farghal (2015) that names' translation (including toponyms) from English into Arabic is not uniform; it considers the context and story of the toponym. The high fantasy genre relies on toponyms for world construction, and reader immersion. This study has shown via the examples provided, and the conscious decisions made by the translator, that the translation of toponyms cannot be taken lightly as they play an important role in the development of the narrative and the construction of the fantastic in the high fantasy genre.

Venuti (2001) pinpointed that the freedom the literary translator has in developing translation methods is "constrained by the current situation in the target-language culture" (244). As a result, the choices of the translator of this series were determined by the nature of the fantastic text, and the reader's expectation of readability and comprehension of the TT. All of which are factors that the translator is aware of as evidenced by his responses. Although these cannot be generalised due to the small sample in the study, they provide opportunities for further investigation of the Arab translator's role in translating literature, particularly in the under-researched genre of high fantasy. They also provide insight for literary translators on the factors that might influence their translation choices, as well as the various techniques that may be utilised for rendering the fantastic into Arabic. This is particularly significant as the high fantasy genre continues to grow in popularity in the Arab world, and so does the demand for its translation.

This study is limited by its investigation of toponyms in the series. Further research may examine the differences in translating other onomastics. It is also limited by its investigation of the only official translation of the series in Arabic. Future research can investigate the difference between authorised and fan translations of high fantasy, the reception of such translations among Arab readers, and the translation procedures between different versions of the series, such as its adaptation and subtitling into Arabic.

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