
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mediating Palestinian cultural difference between visibility and readability in translation of Nasrallah's *Time of White Horses*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Nancy Roberts's English translation of Ibrahim Nasrallah's *Time of White Horses* negotiates textual readability and the visibility of Palestinian cultural difference. Drawing on Venuti's domestication–foreignization framework, it introduces the complementary concepts of token visibility and relational visibility. Token visibility refers to the retention of culturally marked lexical forms, whereas relational visibility concerns the recoverability of the social, historical, symbolic, ritual, and institutional relations embedded in those forms. Using a qualitative comparative design, the study analyses 15 purposively selected Arabic–English textual pairs from Nasrallah's Arabic novel and Roberts's translation. The examples cover devotional and religious language, material culture and everyday practice, communal, legal, and administrative institutions, and political-historical terminology. The findings show that Roberts neither consistently domesticates nor uniformly foreignizes Palestinian cultural difference. Borrowing and transliteration preserve token visibility in terms such as *Fatiha*, *dalla*, and *qa'imaqam*, but lexical retention does not necessarily make their cultural functions accessible to English-language readers. Conversely, functional equivalents such as "village midwife" and "bread oven" replace Arabic signifiers while preserving immediate referential meaning and narrative function. The most consequential shifts occur in the translation of customary, legal, and administrative institutions. Renderings such as "guesthouse," "the deed," and "peacemaking delegation" facilitate comprehension but reduce the visibility of authority structures, historical procedures, and collective practices encoded by *maqāfa*, *kūshān*, and *jāha*. By contrast, "district head, or *qa'imaqam*" shows how concise intra-textual glossing can combine readability with lexical and relational visibility. The study argues that domestication is most consequential when familiar English categories narrow source-specific relational systems, while foreignization remains limited when retained terms are socially or historically opaque.

KEYWORDS

Arabic–English literary translation; cultural visibility; domestication; foreignization; Palestinian literature; relational visibility; *Time of White Horses*.

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1. Introduction

Literary translation reconstructs a work for readers whose linguistic conventions, cultural knowledge, and historical assumptions may differ from those presupposed by the source text. This process becomes especially consequential when translation mediates the historical experience of a community whose past is transmitted to international readers through cultural and linguistic representation. Choices that improve intelligibility may facilitate access to a narrative while making culturally specific meanings less perceptible. Readability and cultural visibility are therefore neither mutually exclusive nor straightforward opposites; their relationship must be examined through particular translation decisions and the cultural relations those decisions reconstruct.

Ibrahim Nasrallah's *Zaman al-Khayl al-Bayda'* (2007), first published in Arabic in 2007 and translated by Nancy Roberts as *Time of White Horses* (2016), provides a productive case for investigating this relationship. The novel follows three generations of a Palestinian family from the late Ottoman period through the British Mandate and the events of 1948. Its representation of village life draws on culturally dense references to horses, land, agriculture, kinship, customary authority, religious practice, oral expression, and communal conflict. These elements do more than provide local color: they organize social relationships, transmit historical knowledge, and connect individual experience with collective memory.

The novel's recurring horse imagery illustrates the translation problem in concentrated form. Horses are associated not only with possession or mobility, but also with the soul, honor, lineage, attachment, protection, and freedom. An English rendering may communicate the immediate meaning of an individual comparison while leaving the larger symbolic network less accessible. The relevant question is therefore not simply whether a translation is lexically accurate, but whether the target text makes perceptible the cultural and narrative relationships through which an image acquires significance.

Venuti's (1995) distinction between domestication and foreignization provides the principal framework for examining these decisions. Domestication accommodates the foreign text to receiving-language conventions and cultural values, commonly through fluent and familiar formulations, whereas foreignization places pressure on those conventions so that linguistic and cultural difference remains perceptible. These concepts should not be treated as rigid classifications applicable to an entire translation. The same target text may retain an Arabic honorific, explain a historical title, generalize a customary institution, and closely translate a cultural metaphor. The analytical question is consequently where and how particular choices move toward readability, cultural visibility, or a combination of both.

Previous research demonstrates that Roberts's strategies vary across textual categories. Awwad (2021) concludes that Roberts domesticates many forms of Palestinian oral tradition, thereby reducing some of their stylistic, social, and national functions. Hamamra et al. (2022) show that Palestinian dialect performs functions extending beyond referential meaning, including marking social distance, expressing familial relations, producing humor, encoding social meaning, and affirming Palestinian identity. Hamamra et al. (2023) similarly find that the translation of Palestinian folksongs attenuates features associated with dialect, repetition, meter, and rhyme. These studies establish that immediate meaning may survive while the formal or social relationships through which that meaning operates become less visible.

Existing studies, however, do not fully explain how readability and visibility interact across different cultural categories within Roberts's translation. Research concentrating on dialect, folksongs, or oral tradition cannot by itself determine whether

comparable effects occur in the translation of metaphors, material objects, religious expressions, political terms, and customary institutions. Nor does the retention of a foreign form necessarily demonstrate the preservation of cultural meaning. A transliterated Arabic term may remain visibly foreign while communicating little about its social function, whereas a familiar English expression may preserve an important pragmatic or narrative relationship despite replacing the source form. Equating fluent translation with cultural erasure, or borrowing with successful preservation, would therefore substitute procedural labels for contextual analysis.

To clarify this problem, the study distinguishes between token visibility and relational visibility. Token visibility refers to the perceptible retention of a culturally marked sign, such as an Arabic title, honorific, object name, religious expression, or culturally specific image. Relational visibility refers to the extent to which the target passage makes recoverable the sign's connections to social practices, historical conditions, symbolic associations, ritual functions, or institutions. A borrowed expression may possess high token visibility but limited relational visibility when it appears without sufficient contextual support. Conversely, a functional English equivalent may have low token visibility while preserving a culturally important social or narrative relationship.

The study treats readability as a related but distinct concept. Readability refers to observable linguistic and contextual resources that facilitate interpretation, including lexical familiarity, idiomatic syntax, paraphrase, specification, contextual explanation, and co-textual support. It does not refer to the demonstrated responses of Anglophone readers because the study does not include reception research. The analysis therefore evaluates the interpretive resources offered by the target text rather than claiming what individual readers necessarily understand.

The study examines 15 purposively selected Arabic–English textual pairs verified against Nasrallah's Arabic novel and Roberts's published translation. The examples represent devotional and religious language, material culture and everyday practice, communal and administrative institutions, and political and historical terminology. Each case is analyzed in relation to its immediate meaning, cultural associations, narrative function, translation procedure, textual readability, token visibility, and relational visibility. The unit of analysis is therefore the contextualized source–target pair rather than the isolated Arabic word.

The study argues that Roberts selectively distributes cultural visibility rather than consistently domesticating or foreignizing the novel. Readable English does not necessarily erase Palestinian difference, just as visibly foreign vocabulary does not necessarily preserve its cultural significance. The most consequential shifts occur when an accessible English formulation preserves immediate referential meaning while attenuating the symbolic, customary, historical, or institutional relationships encoded by the Arabic expression. By distinguishing the visibility of cultural signs from the visibility of the relations they embody, the study offers a more differentiated application of Venuti's framework. Its claims remain deliberately bounded: the analysis concerns 15 purposively selected passages and does not characterize every translation decision in *Time of White Horses* (2016).

2. Literature Review

Translation of culturally dense fiction is often discussed in relation to a tension between intelligibility in receiving language and the preservation of differences encoded in the source text. Franco Aixelá (1996) defines culture-specific items as textual elements whose "function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem" when transferred into another cultural system (p. 58). Such difficulty may arise because a referent is absent from the target culture or because it occupies a different intertextual

or cultural position there. Cultural specificity is therefore relational rather than inherent: an expression becomes culturally marked through the interaction between its textual function and the cultural knowledge available to target readers.

This relational conception is especially useful in Arabic–English literary translation. Lexical choices that appear ordinary may encode locally situated knowledge concerning religion, kinship, dress, customary authority, hospitality, agriculture, and collective memory. Such expressions may have recognizable dictionary meanings while activating cultural associations for which English offers no direct counterpart. The relevant analytical question is therefore not simply whether an Arabic word is retained, but whether the target text makes perceptible the social, historical, and symbolic relationships through which that word acquires significance

2.1 Domestication and Foreignization

Venuti's (1995) account of domestication and foreignization provides the primary theoretical framework for examining this problem. He defines domestication as "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values," whereas foreignization exerts "an ethnodeviant pressure" on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text (pp. 19–20). Domestication accommodates the source text to conventions familiar within the receiving culture, often through fluent and idiomatic discourse. Foreignization, by contrast, makes aspects of source-cultural difference perceptible by placing pressure on those conventions.

These orientations have ethical and cultural implications, particularly when a text moves from a comparatively marginalized language or culture into a globally dominant one. Venuti's (1995) critique is not directed at readability itself; rather, it concerns a form of fluency that conceals the cultural and interpretive transformations through which translation is produced. A translation may be read naturally because unfamiliar distinctions have been reorganized into categories already familiar to target readers. Fluency can thus create an impression of transparent access while making the translator's mediation less visible.

Domestication and foreignization should not, however, be treated as mechanically opposed procedures or total descriptions of a translated work. Retention, literal translation, paraphrase, glossing, generalization, omission, and cultural substitution do not have fixed ideological effects outside their textual contexts. A retained Arabic term may signal linguistic difference while withholding the information required to understand its social or institutional function. Conversely, a fluent English phrase may preserve an important pragmatic relationship even while replacing the lexical form of the Arabic expression. Venuti's distinction is therefore most useful as an interpretive continuum for examining the local effects of particular translation choices.

2.2 Translation Norms

Toury's (2012) account of translation as norm-governed behavior provides contextual support for applying Venuti's framework at the level of individual decisions. He conceptualizes norms as shared cultural values transformed into instructions that regulate translational behavior (p. 63). Translators work within historically and culturally situated expectations concerning what constitutes an appropriate relationship between source and target texts. Translation choices are consequently not merely individual linguistic preferences; they may also reflect norms operating within the cultures that produce and receive translations.

Toury's (2012) initial norm distinguishes between orientation towards source-text norms, generally described as adequacy, and orientation towards target-cultural norms, described as acceptability. A translation oriented towards adequacy tends to preserve source-text relationships even when these conflict with target-cultural expectations. A translation oriented towards acceptability tends to conform more closely to target-language and target-cultural norms. Since actual translations generally combine both orientations, adequacy and acceptability are better understood as poles on a continuum than as absolute categories.

Toury's (2012) textual-linguistic norms are relevant because they concern the selection of target-language material used to replace source-text material (p. 83). They can contextualize recurring choices involving culturally marked vocabulary, metaphors, honorifics, religious expressions, and customary institutions. Adequacy and acceptability should not, however, be equated with visibility and readability. The former describes orientations towards source- and target-cultural norms; the latter describe effects generated by particular target-text formulations. A target-oriented expression may remain readable while preserving a significant cultural relationship, just as a source-oriented borrowing may retain Arabic form without clarifying its cultural significance.

2.3 Culture-Specific Strategies

Research on culture-specific items further demonstrates the need to distinguish formal procedures from cultural effects. Franco Aixelá (1996) organizes translation strategies along a continuum from conservation to substitution. Conservation includes repetition, orthographic adaptation, linguistic translation, extratextual gloss, and intratextual gloss. Substitution includes synonymy, limited universalization, absolute universalization, naturalization, deletion, and autonomous creation. This continuum identifies the degree to which a target-text expression formally departs from a source-cultural item without assuming that a particular procedure will always produce the same cultural result.

Pedersen (2005), writing principally about subtitling, similarly distinguishes retention, specification, direct translation, generalization, substitution, omission, and official equivalence. Retention permits a source-language element to enter the target text, whereas specification retains the reference while adding information intended to make it more accessible. Pedersen also emphasizes contextual factors, including the centrality of the reference, surrounding co-text, audience knowledge, and medium-specific constraints. Although this taxonomy was developed for audiovisual translation and is not adopted as a literary-translation model, it is used here as a descriptive heuristic: cultural references cannot be evaluated independently of their textual position, communicative function, and assumed audience.

These classifications describe what occurs procedurally, but neither a procedural label nor a numerical count of retained items can establish what occurs culturally. Retention may preserve visible form without conveying connotation. Specification or intratextual explanation may combine cultural difference with accessibility, while generalization may communicate immediate narrative function but weaken distinctions encoded in the source text. Evaluation therefore requires attention to denotation, connotation, pragmatic force, symbolic association, narrative function, and the contextual support available in the target text.

2.4 Culture and Accessibility

Leppihalme's (1997) concept of the culture bump helps explain why lexical retention does not necessarily make a cultural reference intelligible. She defines a culture bump as "a situation where the reader of a TT has a problem understanding a source-cultural allusion" (p. 4). Difficulty arises when the source text presupposes cultural or intertextual knowledge unavailable to target readers.

A reference may thus remain formally present in translation while failing to communicate the associations that give it cultural or narrative significance.

Leppihalme's (1997) model is particularly relevant to religious references, proverbial expressions, historical titles, and customary practices whose meanings cannot be recovered from dictionary definitions alone. As she notes, culture-bound allusions constitute "translation problems requiring problem-solving and the use of appropriate strategies" (p. 3). Her approach remains supplementary to Venuti's framework because the present study extends beyond allusion to material objects, metaphors, honorifics, religious formulas, and customary institutions.

The relationship between readability and cultural visibility is therefore less stable than a simple opposition suggests. Fluency may conceal the interpretive processes through which culturally embedded distinctions become familiar English categories. Yet cultural difference is not preserved simply through lexical opacity. A translation may appear foreign at the level of individual words while remaining reductive at the level of social or institutional meaning. It may also combine a borrowed expression with intratextual explanation, retaining cultural location without abandoning intelligibility.

Readability and visibility are consequently treated here as interacting dimensions. Their relationship must be examined at multiple levels: the perceptible survival of a culturally marked sign, the accessibility of its immediate contextual meaning, and the preservation or reconfiguration of its links with Palestinian social life. This multilevel perspective avoids treating fluent English as automatic cultural erasure or every Arabic borrowing as evidence of successful preservation.

2.5 Arabic and Cultural Identity

The relationship between linguistic form and cultural identity is especially significant in Arabic literary translation. Arabic linguistic practice involves dynamic interaction between Standard Arabic and regionally and socially differentiated vernaculars. Ryding (2005) describes this variation as a continuum of formal and colloquial practices rather than a rigid division between two autonomous linguistic systems. These varieties carry distinct social, communicative, and expressive associations.

Palestinian vernacular Arabic may index locality, intimacy, family relationships, social distance, age, status, solidarity, or conflict. It also operates in oral forms such as songs, storytelling, humor, proverbs, blessings, and conversational formulas. Translating dialectal utterances into standard English may preserve immediate referential meaning while weakening relationships involving locality, social position, interpersonal alignment, and collective identity (Hamamra et al., 2022; ALYousef, 2026).

This issue extends beyond dialect. A kinship expression may indicate a literal family relationship, function as an affectionate address, mark age, or acknowledge social obligation. A religious formula may perform blessing, gratitude, agreement, resignation, anger, or irony; verbal emphasis and repetition may likewise carry interpersonal and rhetorical force (ALYousef & Mahadi, 2019a, 2019b). An item of clothing may indicate gender, locality, status, occupation, or historical period. Translation may preserve one of these dimensions while weakening, reorganizing, or reducing repeated emphasis. Cultural visibility should therefore be understood as selective and scalar rather than all-or-nothing.

2.6 Palestinian Literature in Translation

This multilevel perspective is particularly relevant to Palestinian literature, in which language, oral expression, material culture, and historical reference may articulate collective identity and historical presence. Culturally marked forms in Palestinian writing do not merely provide local detail. They can connect individual characters with communal institutions, customary relationships, historical experience, and collective memory.

The translation of Palestinian literature also occurs within asymmetrical cultural and political conditions. Research on the translation of Palestinian writing into Hebrew, for example, demonstrates that the selection and circulation of Palestinian literature cannot be separated from the ideological and institutional structures of the receiving culture. Amit-Kochavi's (2000) historical analysis describes a movement from exclusion towards partial recognition, while later work has approached dialogic Arabic–Hebrew translation as a potential site of Palestinian cultural intervention and presence. Although these studies do not examine Roberts's English translation, they demonstrate that the circulation of Palestinian literature cannot be understood as a neutral transfer of lexical content.

Acknowledging this political dimension does not justify interpreting every movement towards fluent English as erasure or every retained Arabic form as resistance. Such assumptions would predetermine the textual analysis. The cultural effect of a translation decision depends on the function of the source expression, its narrative position, the target formulation, and the contextual resources surrounding it. Cultural visibility concerns which dimensions of difference remain available in the target text and how lexical choice, narrative context, and explanatory framing produce that availability.

Previous studies of *Time of White Horses* (2016) suggest that Roberts combines source- and target-oriented strategies rather than following a single orientation across all cultural categories. Hamouda's analysis of culture-specific items reports a predominantly foreignizing tendency, classifying 77.6% of the examined items as foreignized and 22.4% as domesticated (Hamouda, 2019, as cited in Awwad, 2021, p. 38). Since this finding is currently known through Awwad's discussion, it should remain a secondary citation unless Hamouda's original study is consulted. Hamouda should not be included in the reference list unless the original work is accessed directly.

Awwad's (2021) master's thesis provides the most extensive examination of Roberts's translation of Palestinian oral tradition. It addresses folksongs, proverbs, forms of address, titles and military ranks, religious expressions, swearing formulas, incantations, terms of abuse, conversational formulas, and Palestinian dialect. Drawing on Venuti's domestication–foreignization framework and the cultural-transposition model developed by Dickins et al., Awwad identifies borrowing, literal translation, addition, paraphrase, omission, and cultural substitution.

Awwad reaches a different conclusion from that reported for Hamouda's culture-specific-item corpus. The thesis states that Roberts "domesticates the majority of oral tradition categories" and thus "curtails the stylistic and national identity of oral tradition" (Awwad, 2021, p. xi). It further concludes that "the dominant translation strategy used is domestication through the use of communicative translation and cultural transplantation" (p. 122). Awwad links this tendency with the loss or restructuring of dialectal, stylistic, social, and political dimensions of Palestinian oral tradition.

Subsequent studies examine particular elements of oral tradition in greater depth. Hamamra et al. (2022) analyses the functions and translation of Palestinian dialect in *Time of White Horses* (2016). They identify functions that include signaling family relationships and social distance, producing humor, encoding meaning, and affirming Palestinian identity. Their analysis indicates that English standardization may retain immediate semantic content while weakening social and identity-bearing relationships performed through Palestinian dialect.

Hamamra et al. (2023) examine the translation of Palestinian folksongs in the novel. They conclude that Roberts's translation reduces identity-bearing features associated with dialect, repetition, meter, and rhyme. Since these formal qualities contribute to performance, memorability, communal participation, and local identity, their alteration affects more than the songs' aesthetic surface. A translation may communicate what a song says while weakening the formal and social mechanisms through which it functions as oral tradition.

The apparent divergence between the predominantly foreignizing pattern reported for culture-specific items and the predominantly domesticating pattern found in research on oral tradition is methodologically instructive. These studies examine different categories, use different units of analysis, and evaluate different dimensions of Roberts's translation. A target text may retain object names, religious vocabulary, place names, or administrative titles while standardizing dialect, restructuring oral genres, or weakening metaphorical associations and narrative force (ALYousef, 2026). The same translation may therefore display high lexical retention in one category and considerable target-cultural accommodation in another.

These findings demonstrate why Roberts's overall orientation cannot be inferred from isolated examples or established solely by counting procedures. Quantitative patterns can identify recurring strategies, but they cannot independently explain their cultural consequences. A borrowed word may count as foreignization while its cultural function remains inaccessible. Conversely, an English reformulation may count as domestication while preserving a significant pragmatic or narrative relationship. The direction and consequence of each decision must therefore be established category by category and passage by passage.

The existing study provides a substantial foundation rather than an unoccupied field. It offers theoretical accounts of domestication, foreignization, translation norms, culture-specific items, and culture-bound references. It also supplies detailed analyses of culture-specific vocabulary, oral tradition, Palestinian dialect, and folksongs in Roberts's translation. However, the reviewed studies primarily classify procedures or analyze discrete categories; they do not distinguish systematically between the lexical retention of a culturally marked sign and the recoverability of the social, historical, symbolic, or institutional relations through which that sign acquires meaning. This unresolved distinction constitutes the study's bounded research gap.

The present study addresses this problem through an independently conducted comparative analysis of 12 Arabic–English textual pairs selected from Nasrallah's novel and Roberts's published translation. Some passages overlap with examples addressed in previous studies because the studies examine the same primary texts. However, the examples are verified against the Arabic and English editions and reorganized around a different analytical problem. The analysis does not reproduce Awwad's (2021) classifications or infer cultural preservation directly from whether a procedure is labeled domesticating or foreignizing.

Instead, the study distinguishes between token visibility and relational visibility. Token visibility refers to the perceptible retention of a culturally marked sign, such as a transliterated honorific, religious term, object name, or administrative title. Relational visibility

refers to the extent to which the target passage makes recoverable the sign's connections with social practices, symbolic associations, historical circumstances, and institutional relationships. These are analytical distinctions developed for the present study; they are not established categories attributed to Venuti, Toury, or earlier studies.

This distinction modifies the evaluative question. Rather than asking only whether Roberts domesticates or foreignizes a cultural expression, the analysis considers what becomes textually readable, what remains recognizably Palestinian, what requires contextual reconstruction, and what changes when an English category reorganizes relationships encoded by the Arabic expression. It also recognizes that a borrowed Arabic term may have high token visibility but limited relational visibility, while an accessible English formulation may preserve a culturally significant function despite replacing the source expression's lexical form.

The study therefore uses Venuti's framework as its primary interpretive framework. Toury contextualizes source- and target-oriented tendencies, whereas Franco Aixelá, Pedersen, and Leppihalme inform procedural description and the interpretation of cultural accessibility. The study's original concepts—token visibility and relational visibility—are operationalized in the methodology through defined criteria and case-by-case textual evidence. This approach neither presumes that foreignization necessarily preserves cultural meaning nor equates readability with cultural loss. It offers a more differentiated account of Palestinian cultural visibility than either binary classification or frequency-based description can provide.

3. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1 Analytical Framework

This study adopts Venuti's domestication–foreignization distinction as its principal framework for examining the mediation of Palestinian cultural difference in Nancy Roberts's English translation of *Time of White Horses* (2016). Venuti (1995) defines domestication as "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values," whereas foreignization applies "an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text" (pp. 19–20). Domestication thus tends to accommodate culturally unfamiliar material to conventions available within the receiving language and culture, while foreignization places pressure on those conventions so that aspects of source-text difference remain perceptible.

This distinction is relevant to *Time of White Horses* (2016) because the novel represents Palestinian life through expressions whose meanings extend beyond immediate lexical reference. References to horses, clothing, agricultural objects, kinship, honorifics, religious formulas, and customary institutions participate in networks of social, symbolic, and historical meaning. In rendering these expressions in English, Roberts negotiates between linguistic accessibility and the cultural differences through which the novel constructs its Palestinian setting. Venuti's framework permits these decisions to be examined in terms of their cultural orientation rather than solely through lexical equivalence.

Domestication and foreignization are not treated as mutually exclusive classifications applicable to the translation as a whole. Individual passages may combine source- and target-oriented procedures, and the same procedure may produce different cultural effects in different contexts. Borrowing, for example, may preserve the visible Arabic form of an honorific or object name without making its social or institutional significance accessible. Conversely, a fluent English formulation may replace a source-text form

while preserving an important pragmatic or narrative relationship. The analysis therefore identifies domesticating and foreignizing tendencies at the level of individual translation decisions rather than assigning Roberts's translation a single, uniform orientation.

Toury's (2012) account of translation norms supplements this decision-level application of Venuti's framework. Toury conceptualizes translation as behavior shaped by norms operating within particular social and cultural contexts. His initial norm distinguishes between orientation toward source-text norms, associated with adequacy, and orientation toward target-cultural norms, associated with acceptability. Actual translations generally combine these orientations rather than conforming absolutely to either pole. Toury's model consequently helps contextualize Roberts's decisions as negotiations between source- and target-cultural expectations.

Adequacy and acceptability are not treated as synonyms for cultural visibility and textual readability. Toury's categories describe a translation's orientation toward source- or target-cultural norms, whereas visibility and readability describe effects generated by particular renderings. A target-oriented formulation may produce accessible English without eliminating culturally significant relationships. Conversely, a source-oriented borrowing may retain a culturally marked Arabic form without making its cultural significance interpretable. Toury's framework is therefore used descriptively to contextualize translational tendencies rather than to determine cultural preservation or loss automatically.

To specify the effects of these tendencies more precisely, the study distinguishes between token visibility and relational visibility. Token visibility refers to the perceptible presence of a culturally marked sign in the target text. It may result from borrowing, transliteration, close formal translation, or retention of an Arabic title, object name, religious expression, or culturally specific image. Token visibility therefore concerns whether Palestinian cultural difference remains recognizable at the lexical or textual surface.

Relational visibility refers to the extent to which the target passage makes available the social, historical, symbolic, ritual, or institutional relationships through which a culturally marked sign acquires significance. A term has relational visibility when its translation preserves or reconstructs connections to kinship hierarchy, customary authority, religious practice, collective memory, gender relations, agricultural life, honor, lineage, or communal organization. Relational visibility consequently concerns not only whether a cultural sign remains present but also whether its associated relationships remain recoverable from the target passage.

Token and relational visibility may converge or diverge. A borrowed Arabic expression accompanied by adequate contextual information may achieve both forms of visibility. An unexplained borrowing may retain high token visibility while offering limited relational visibility. A functional English formulation may have low token visibility while preserving a culturally important social, pragmatic, or narrative relationship. A generalized or substitutive rendering may reduce both forms of visibility when it replaces the source-cultural sign and attenuates the relationships associated with it.

The study treats textual readability as a related but distinct concept. Readability refers to observable linguistic and contextual resources that facilitate interpretation, including idiomatic syntax, lexical familiarity, paraphrase, specification, intratextual explanation, and contextual clues. It does not refer to empirically demonstrated responses of Anglophone readers because the study does not include reception research. Claims concerning readability are therefore restricted to reader-oriented features observable in Roberts's text rather than assumptions about what individual readers understand.

Table 1: Analytical dimensions

Dimension	Operational focus	Typical textual evidence
Domestication	Accommodation to familiar English-language or cultural conventions	Generalization, substitution, naturalization, omission, or familiarizing paraphrase
Foreignization	Retention or foregrounding of source-cultural difference	Borrowing, transliteration, close translation, retained imagery, or culturally marked wording
Token visibility	Perceptible retention of a cultural sign	Arabic term, title, honorific, object name, religious formula, or source-text image
Relational visibility	Recoverability of the sign's wider cultural relationships	Preservation of social function, ritual use, historical position, symbolism, or institutional meaning
Textual readability	Linguistic and contextual assistance facilitating interpretation	Familiar wording, glossing, specification, paraphrase, explanatory co-text, or syntactic clarity

These dimensions do not correspond mechanically. Foreignization may preserve token visibility without achieving relational visibility, while domestication may improve readability without eliminating culturally significant relationships.

The model distinguishes four possible outcomes. A rendering may preserve both the cultural sign and its relationships; retain the sign while leaving its significance decontextualized; replace the sign while preserving an important function; or communicate immediate referential meaning while attenuating its wider cultural relationships. The final outcome is particularly significant because semantic intelligibility may conceal a reduction in the visibility of symbolic, customary, historical, or institutional systems.

3.2 Design and Corpus

The study employs a qualitative comparative textual design. Its purpose is interpretive rather than statistical: it does not calculate the overall frequency of domesticating and foreignizing procedures or attempt to characterize Roberts's complete translation. The primary texts are Nasrallah's *Zaman al-Khayl al-Bayda'* (2007) and Roberts's English translation, *Time of White Horses* (2016).

The corpus comprises 15 purposively selected Arabic–English textual pairs representing four domains: devotional and religious language; material culture and everyday practice; communal, legal, and administrative institutions; and political-historical terminology. Cases were selected when the source expression was culturally marked in context, carried significance beyond immediate denotation, and generated an analytically relevant interaction among readability, token visibility, and relational visibility. Contrasting cases were included to avoid designing the sample around a presupposition of cultural loss.

Some passages have been discussed in earlier studies because previous studies and the present study examine the same primary texts. Each example was nevertheless verified against the Arabic and English editions and reconsidered within its immediate co-text and narrative setting. Earlier studies are cited where it informs the identification or interpretation of a passage. The present study does not reproduce previous classifications; rather, it reorganizes selected evidence around the relationship between readability and two levels of cultural visibility.

The unit of analysis is the contextualized source–target pair. Each unit includes the Arabic expression, its immediate co-text and narrative situation, the cultural relationships activated by its use, Roberts's English formulation, and any explanatory support supplied in the target passage. This unit permits lexical retention to be distinguished from pragmatic, social, symbolic, and institutional preservation.

3.3 Analytical Procedure

Each source–target pair is examined in five stages. First, the Arabic expression is situated in its immediate narrative context, and its referential meaning, cultural associations, and narrative function are identified. Cultural claims are based on textual context and, where necessary, relevant linguistic, historical, or cultural studies.

Second, Roberts's rendering is described according to its principal procedure: borrowing, transliteration, close translation, specification, explanation, paraphrase, generalization, substitution, or omission. These labels describe the form of transfer but do not determine its cultural consequence automatically.

Third, the rendering is examined for textual readability through lexical familiarity, grammatical naturalness, explanation, contextual inference, and other forms of interpretive assistance. Since the study does not include reception data, readability refers solely to observable resources within the target text.

Fourth, token visibility is assessed according to whether a culturally marked source sign remains perceptible. Relational visibility is then evaluated by determining whether the target passage preserves, contextualizes, reconfigures, or attenuates the sign's social, symbolic, historical, ritual, or institutional relationships.

Finally, the decision is interpreted as tending toward domestication, foreignization, or a mixed orientation. A mixed orientation is recorded when dimensions move in different directions, as when borrowing preserves token visibility but insufficient contextual support limits relational visibility. Relational visibility is described qualitatively as preserved, contextualized, partially preserved, reconfigured, or attenuated, rather than converted into numerical scores.

Several safeguards limit overgeneralization. Cultural expressions are not treated as having a single fixed meaning, and cultural associations are attributed only where they are supported by context or study. Omission is distinguished from attenuation: omission indicates that a source sign or function is absent, whereas attenuation indicates that it remains but is less prominent or less recoverable. Formal differences are not automatically attributed to translator ideology because Arabic and English use different lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical resources. Alternative interpretations are retained where a rendering reduces cultural specificity while preserving communicative or narrative force.

The study is limited to 15 purposively selected cases and makes no claim to statistical representativeness. It examines textual effects rather than Roberts's intentions and does not measure how actual readers respond to the translation. Finally, Palestinian culture is not treated as homogeneous or static; the analysis concerns the historical and cultural relationships constructed in Nasrallah's narrative and their reconstruction in Roberts's English translation.

4. Findings and Discussion

The analysis examines 15 purposively selected Arabic–English textual pairs across four domains: devotional and religious language, material culture and everyday practice, communal and administrative institutions, and political and historical positioning. The purpose is not to measure the overall frequency of translation procedures but to determine how individual renderings negotiate textual readability, token visibility, and relational visibility.

Following Venuti (1995), domestication and foreignization are treated as tendencies within particular decisions rather than fixed classifications of Roberts’s translation. A rendering may retain a culturally marked form while leaving its social significance unclear or replace the source form while preserving an important pragmatic or narrative function. The discussion therefore evaluates not only whether a cultural sign remains lexically visible but also whether its social, symbolic, historical, ritual, or institutional relationships remain recoverable.

4.1 Devotional and Religious Language

Religious expressions in the novel perform more than referential functions. They enact courtesy, strengthen assertions, invoke scriptural knowledge, and connect sacred imagery with Palestinian place and collective memory. The following cases demonstrate different relationships among religious visibility, contextual accessibility, and pragmatic meaning.

Example 1: Devotional blessing

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 25). إن شاء الله ... أدام الله عزك وحفظ بيتك عامراً.

TT: “God willing. May God prolong the days of your prosperity and protect you and your household” (Roberts, 2016, p. 18)

Roberts closely preserves the utterance’s devotional orientation. “God willing” renders *in shā’ Allāh*, while the following reference to God prevents the blessing from becoming a secular expression of goodwill. The main shift occurs in the image of the inhabited house. The Arabic blessing wishes that the addressee’s home remains inhabited and prosperous, linking the physical house to descendants, continuity, and attachment to place. “Household” retains the family as a social unit but backgrounds the material and genealogical implications of the house. The rendering is therefore highly readable and retains religious visibility, but its relational visibility is partial: the spiritual and interpersonal functions survive more fully than the spatial and genealogical image. This is a mixed case in which close translation coexists with limited pragmatic domestication.

Example 2: Divorce oath

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, pp. 17–18). علي الطلاق.

TT: “If she isn’t ... I’ll divorce her!” (Roberts, 2016, p. 21)

The Arabic *‘alayya al-ṭalāq* functions not merely as a declaration concerning divorce but as a conventional oath used to intensify an assertion. Roberts’s “I’ll divorce her!” preserves the apparent consequence and emotional force, making the statement

immediately intelligible. Nevertheless, the English wording can be interpreted as a literal intention, threat, or comic exaggeration rather than a culturally recognized oath formula. The rendering thus maintains much of the utterance's illocutionary force while attenuating the social convention through which that force is produced. Its lexical content remains visible, but its relational visibility is reduced. The decision tends towards pragmatic domestication because it reconstructs a conventional oath through a more familiar English speech act.

Example 3: Qur'anic titles

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 20) الفاتحة ... سورة التين

TT: "the Fatiha ... the chapter of the Qur'an entitled 'The Fig'" (Roberts, 2016, p. 25)

Roberts employs two different strategies for Qur'anic titles within the same passage. "*Fatiha*" retains the Arabic name without an immediate gloss, producing high token visibility but requiring prior knowledge to recover its meaning and ritual significance. *Sūrat al-Tīn*, by contrast, becomes "the chapter of the Qur'an entitled 'The Fig.'" This formulation removes the Arabic title but identifies its scriptural location and semantic meaning. The former solution is foreignizing at the lexical level but offers limited relational assistance; the latter is formally domesticating but more contextually informative. The contrast demonstrates that retention is not inherently more culturally adequate than explanation. Readability and visibility are redistributed: one solution preserves the cultural sign, while the other clarifies the sign's semantic and scriptural relationship.

Example 4: Marian and olive-tree imagery

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 292) منزلة كسيدتنا مريم ... زيتونة معمرة

TT: "our Lady the Virgin Mary ... a long-lived olive tree" (Roberts, 2016, p. 324)

The comparison is transferred through close translation. "Our Lady the Virgin Mary" draws on established English Christian vocabulary, while "a long-lived olive tree" preserves the central vegetal image without creating lexical opacity. Both components of the simile therefore remain readable and recognizable. Their cultural associations, however, extend beyond denotation. The Virgin Mary participates in Palestinian Christian religious life, while the olive tree may evoke endurance, rootedness, continuity, land, and historical presence. These associations are not erased, but their recoverability depends on the novel's wider symbolic pattern and on contextual knowledge. The case shows that limited relational visibility does not necessarily result from domestication. Close translation can preserve both imagery and readability without guaranteeing identical cultural activation.

Taken together, these cases show that explicit sacred references are generally more transferable than conventional religious speech acts. Roberts preserves the religious orientation of the passages, but the divorce oath and the blessing demonstrate that the pragmatic and genealogical relationships surrounding religious language may become less perceptible. Domestication therefore occurs selectively at the level of cultural function rather than through the removal of religious reference.

4.2 Material Culture

Material expressions connect objects with embodied practices, domestic organisation, sound, labor, and local knowledge. The following examples demonstrate that borrowing, description, and functional equivalence produce different combinations of accessibility and cultural visibility.

Example 5: Clothing and taxation

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 46) الشانية ... الكوفية والعمامة والطربوش

TT: "'hat tax' ... a keffiyeh, a turban, or a fez" (Roberts, 2016, p. 57)

Roberts combines functional description with borrowing. "*Hat tax*" communicates the fiscal practice immediately, while "*keffiyeh*," "*turban*," and "*fez*" retain visible markers of the historical material setting. The administrative designation is domesticated through explanation, but the objects affected by the tax remain culturally marked. This mixed solution coordinates readability with token visibility: readers understand what is being taxed without losing the culturally specific forms of dress. The passage cannot therefore be classified as uniformly domesticating or foreignizing. Its effect arises from the complementary use of description and retention.

Example 6: Coffee implements

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 29) الدلال ... المهباش

TT: "the dalla ... mortar and pestle" (Roberts, 2016, p. 36)

The two coffee-related objects receive different treatments. *Dalla* remains as a borrowed Arabic word, whereas *mihbāsh* becomes the familiar description "mortar and pestle." "*Dalla*" has greater token visibility but provides little independent information about the object. "*Mortar and pestle*" facilitate immediate recognition but reduces the cultural specificity of the *mihbāsh*. In context, the *mihbāsh* is not merely a grinding implement: its rhythm and sound communicate the visitor's status and the emotional character of the occasion. That communicative function must be recovered from the surrounding narration rather than from the English label. The example demonstrates that borrowing does not automatically provide greater relational visibility and that descriptive translation can preserve physical function while attenuating cultural practice.

Example 7: The ṭābūn

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 113) الطابون

TT: "the bread oven" (Roberts, 2016, p. 130)

"*Bread oven*" provides a concise description of the *ṭābūn* and preserves its immediate function in the episode. The rendering is readily interpretable and permits the narrative action to proceed without an explanatory interruption. It does not, however, reproduce the oven's material construction or its relationship to domestic organisation in Palestinian village life. Token visibility is consequently low, and some material specificity is attenuated. Nevertheless, these dimensions are not central to the action in this passage. The rendering therefore achieves substantial referential and narrative preservation despite formal domestication. It shows that replacing a culturally marked object name with functional English does not necessarily result in consequential cultural loss.

Example 8: The *dāya*

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 21) الداية

TT: "the village midwife" (Roberts, 2016, p. 25)

"*Village midwife*" is a close functional equivalent that identifies both occupation and social setting. Although the Arabic term is not retained, the role remains readily recoverable. *Dāya* may carry locally specific associations with experiential knowledge, female authority, customary practice, and communal familiarity, but English offers a sufficiently comparable social category for the function performed in this passage. The rendering consequently has low token visibility but high readability and substantial relational visibility. This counterexample demonstrates that familiar English does not necessarily erase cultural difference. The cultural consequence of domestication depends on whether the target-language category backgrounds distinctions that are important to the particular scene.

Across these cases, no procedure consistently produces the greatest cultural preservation. Borrowing maintains culturally marked forms but may leave their functions opaque. Functional description increases accessibility but may reduce material or historical specificity. The effect depends on whether an object's significance lies principally in its physical use or in the broader social practices associated with it.

4.3 Communal, Legal, and Administrative Institutions

Institutional expressions present a more complex challenge because a single term may condense physical setting, authority, customary procedure, social hierarchy, and historical memory. The following examples show that English functional equivalents often preserve immediate roles while narrowing institutional relationships.

Example 9: The *maḍāfa*

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 395) المضافة

TT: "guesthouse" (Roberts, 2016, p. 437)

"*Guesthouse*" preserves the *maḍāfa*'s hospitality function and identifies it as a place in which visitors are received. The English term is concise, familiar, and narratively unobtrusive. In the novel's social world, however, the *maḍāfa* also functions as a space for male assembly, consultation, mediation, communal deliberation, and customary authority. The translation foregrounds its architectural and hospitable dimensions while backgrounding its institutional role. It therefore achieves high readability but low token visibility and only partial relational visibility. The problem is not lexical inaccuracy; rather, the familiar English category is narrower than the social operation of the Arabic term.

Example 10: The *kūshān*

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 34) الكوشان

TT: "the deed" (Roberts, 2016, p. 42)

"The deed" communicates the document's legal function as evidence of land ownership, allowing readers to understand the dispute without knowledge of Ottoman administration. The generic English category, however, makes the document's historical position less perceptible. The *kūshān* belongs to a particular bureaucratic system through which land ownership was formally recorded. This specificity matters because the passage places inherited knowledge of the land in tension with documentary verification. The translation preserves the legal relationship but attenuates its administrative history. It consequently combines high readability with low token visibility and partial relational visibility.

Example 11: The *jāha*

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 72) جَاهَة

TT: "a sizable peacemaking delegation" (Roberts, 2016, p. 84)

The descriptive paraphrase communicates the group's size and immediate purpose, enabling readers to understand that a delegation has arrived to facilitate reconciliation. The *jāha*, however, is more than an improvised gathering of peacemakers. It participates in a recognized mechanism of customary mediation whose membership, prestige, authority, and procedures are socially regulated. The English formulation converts an institution into a description of its participants and immediate function. It therefore produces high readability and partial functional preservation but low token visibility and attenuated institutional visibility. This is a clear case in which semantic explanation does not fully preserve the relational system encoded by the source term.

Example 12: The *qā'imaqām*

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 12) القائمقام

TT: "the new district head, or *qa'imaqam*" (Roberts, 2016, p. 14)

This rendering combines a functional gloss with retention of the Ottoman title. "*District head*" supplies immediate administrative orientation, while "*qa'imaqam*" preserves the historical nomenclature of the source setting. Unlike "*guesthouse*," "*deed*," and "*peacemaking delegation*," the formulation does not replace the culturally marked sign with its function; it places the sign and the explanation together.

The solution achieves readability, token visibility, and relational visibility more successfully than the other institutional renderings. It resembles, on a limited intra-textual scale, the contextualizing impulse associated with Appiah's (1993) account of thick translation. Although it does not constitute thick translation in Appiah's broader paratextual sense, it demonstrates how concise contextual assistance can preserve historical difference without obstructing interpretation.

The institutional examples display the most consistent attenuation of relational visibility. Functional English labels commonly preserve an institution's immediate role but not the authority, procedures, social relationships, and historical memory condensed within the Arabic term. Domestication is therefore most consequential when a familiar target-language category replaces a source-specific institutional network. The *qā'imaqām* example demonstrates that combining retention with concise explanation can reduce this problem.

4.4 Political and Historical Positioning

Political expressions identify people and institutions while also positioning them morally and historically. The following cases demonstrate that fluent English may preserve or reconfigure political perspective depending on the evaluative associations of the target-language terminology.

Example 13: *Shahīd*

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 323) الشهيد

TT: "the martyr" (Roberts, 2016, p. 358)

"Martyr" provides a close lexical equivalent for *shahīd* and preserves its evaluative orientation. The term presents the death as morally, religiously, or politically meaningful rather than describing the person neutrally. It does not, however, independently activate all the Palestinian national and commemorative associations of *shahīd*. Those relationships depend on the historical context and the novel's treatment of sacrifice, resistance, and collective memory. The rendering has low token visibility but substantial semantic and narrative preservation. Its relational visibility is partial because the specifically Palestinian commemorative framework must be recovered from the wider narrative.

Example 14: Mandate terminology

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 269) المندوب السامي ... الوطن القومي اليهودي في فلسطين

TT: "High Commissioner ... a Jewish national homeland ... in Palestine" (Roberts, 2016, p. 302)

Roberts uses established English historical terminology for the British Mandate and closely preserves the passage's political framing. "*High Commissioner*" identifies the colonial administrative office, while "a Jewish national homeland ... in Palestine" retains the politically consequential language of the source. Because recognized English formulations already exist, readability does not require political or historical generalization. Fluent English and relational visibility reinforce one another: the administrative structure, political policy, and Palestinian perspective remain available in the target passage. This case shows that linguistic familiarity does not necessarily entail ideological domestication.

Example 15: *Thawwār*

ST: (Nasrallah, 2007, p. 349) الثوار

TT: "the rebels" (Roberts, 2016, p. 387)

Thawwār and "*rebels*" overlap referentially because both can designate people engaged in armed opposition, but their evaluative orientations are not identical. The Arabic term, connected lexically to revolution, can position the fighters within a legitimizing anticolonial or national narrative. "*Rebels*" foregrounds resistance to established authority and may be neutral, sympathetic, or delegitimizing according to context.

The English term therefore preserves the immediate referent while potentially reconfiguring its political relationship to authority and legitimacy. This possible shift should not be treated as evidence of Roberts's intention; textual comparison establishes a

potential framing effect rather than a deliberate ideological intervention. The case nevertheless demonstrates that idiomatic lexical equivalence may retain denotation while altering relational visibility.

The political examples show that readability does not consistently produce depoliticization. "*Martyr*" and the established Mandate terminology preserve much of the source text's evaluative and historical positioning, whereas "*rebels*" introduces a more ambivalent target-language frame. Political visibility therefore depends partly on whether English offers an established equivalent whose evaluative orientation aligns with that of the Arabic expression.

4.5 Cross-Case Discussion

The 15 cases do not support a uniform classification of Roberts's translation as either domesticating or foreignizing. Instead, they reveal a selective distribution of cultural visibility. A source-cultural form may survive while its function remains decontextualized, or the Arabic signifier may disappear while an important social or narrative relationship is preserved.

The religious examples illustrate this multidimensionality. "*Fatiha*" retains an Arabic title but offers little immediate contextual assistance, whereas "*The Fig*" removes the Arabic form while identifying both its meaning and its relationship to the Qur'an. Similarly, the devotional blessing preserves religious orientation but attenuates the image of the inhabited home, while the divorce oath retains emphatic force but makes its conventional status less perceptible. Religious visibility is therefore stronger at the level of explicit sacred reference than at the level of culturally conventional usage.

The material examples demonstrate that functional equivalence must be evaluated according to narrative relevance. "*Village midwife*" provides a close target-language category for *dāya* and preserves its immediate social function with limited attenuation. "Bread oven" reduces the material specificity of *ṭābūn* but adequately serves the action of the passage. By contrast, "*mortar and pestle*" identifies the physical form of the *mihbāsh* while leaving its acoustic and communicative role dependent on the surrounding narration. Functional description is most reductive when an object carries significant social practices beyond its physical use.

The institutional cases reveal the clearest divergence between referential and relational meaning. "*Guesthouse*," "*deed*," and "*peacemaking delegation*" accurately communicate immediate functions but background the systems of authority, procedure, and historical memory represented by *maḍāfa*, *kūshān*, and *jāha*. "*District head, or qa'imaqam*," by contrast, combines explanation with retention and therefore coordinates readability with lexical and historical visibility. Institutional density, rather than lexical unfamiliarity alone, appears to predict the greatest cultural attenuation.

The political cases show that lexical familiarity is not equivalent to ideological neutralization. "*Martyr*" preserves the evaluative force of *shahīd*, although its specifically Palestinian commemorative relationships remain context-dependent. Established Mandate terminology remains both readable and historically precise. "*Rebels*," however, may alter the perspective encoded by *thawwār* because the target term carries a potentially different relationship to political legitimacy.

Across the corpus, the most effective solutions are not necessarily the most visibly foreign. A borrowed term may retain token visibility without communicating its cultural function, while a familiar equivalent may preserve substantial relational meaning. The strongest renderings coordinate recognition of the culturally marked sign, contextual assistance, and preservation of the

expression's function within the passage. The rendering "*the new district head, or qa'imaqam*" exemplifies this balance, whereas "*a sizable peacemaking delegation*" demonstrates how functional clarity may coexist with institutional attenuation.

The findings indicate that Roberts mediates Palestinian cultural difference through selective visibility. Sacred names, material emblems, and historical titles frequently remain lexically or symbolically visible, whereas customary, legal, and administrative relationships are more often reconstructed through familiar English functional categories. Palestinian difference is neither comprehensively erased nor uniformly preserved. Cultural signs and objects are generally easier to retain than the relational networks through which they acquire meaning.

This pattern refines the application of Venuti's (1995) framework. The most consequential domesticating effects do not arise from fluent English alone, but from replacing source-specific relational systems with narrower target-language categories. Conversely, foreignization does not guarantee cultural preservation when a retained term remains socially, symbolically, or institutionally opaque. The significance of each decision must therefore be assessed through the interaction among lexical form, contextual assistance, narrative function, and relational recoverability.

These findings remain bounded by the study's qualitative design. The 15 cases were purposively selected for analytical relevance and contrast and cannot establish the prevalence of particular procedures throughout *Time of White Horses* (Nasrallah, 2016). Textual comparison also cannot establish Roberts's intentions. It supports a more limited conclusion about textual effects: readability and Palestinian cultural visibility may reinforce one another, coexist unevenly, or enter into tension according to the cultural and narrative functions performed by the translated expression.

5. Conclusion

This study examined how Nancy Roberts's English translation of *Time of White Horses* (2016) negotiates textual readability alongside the cultural visibility of selected Palestinian expressions. Through qualitative analysis of 15 Arabic–English textual pairs, it considered devotional and religious language, material culture and everyday practice, communal and administrative institutions, and political and historical terminology. Venuti's (1995) domestication–foreignization distinction served as the principal framework, supplemented by the distinction developed in this study between token visibility and relational visibility.

The findings indicate that Roberts distributes cultural visibility selectively rather than applying a consistently domesticating or foreignizing approach to Palestinian difference. Borrowing and transliteration preserve token visibility in expressions such as *Fatiha*, *dalla*, and *qa'imaqam*. Yet retaining an Arabic lexical item does not automatically make its cultural or social function accessible to English-language readers. In contrast, functional equivalents such as "village midwife" and "bread oven" replace the Arabic signifier while preserving the immediate referent and narrative role with relatively limited attenuation. Readability and cultural visibility, therefore, should be understood as interacting dimensions rather than mutually exclusive outcomes.

The most consequential shifts appear in translations of customary, legal, and administrative institutions. Renderings such as "guesthouse," "the deed," and "peacemaking delegation" communicate an immediately intelligible function, but they make less visible the networks of authority, procedure, historical administration, and collective practice encoded by *maḍāfa*, *kūshān*, and

jāha. These cases demonstrate the distinction between semantic intelligibility and relational visibility: readers may understand what occurs in a scene while receiving a narrower representation of the institution through which it occurs.

By contrast, “district head, or *qa’imaqam*” shows how concise contextualization can support readability while preserving both token and relational visibility. The functional gloss enables immediate interpretation, whereas the retained title preserves the historical terminology of the Ottoman administrative setting. This solution suggests that translating cultural difference does not always require a choice between unexplained borrowing and complete replacement. In appropriate contexts, brief intra-textual explanation can sustain cultural location without unduly interrupting narrative movement.

The political examples further show that linguistic fluency does not necessarily neutralize Palestinian historical positioning. “Martyr” preserves much of the evaluative force of *shahīd*, while established Mandate terminology remains both readable and historically specific. The rendering of *thawwār* as “rebels,” however, illustrates how a referentially plausible English equivalent can introduce a different relationship to authority and political legitimacy. The implications of a translation choice depend not only on denotative meaning but also on the evaluative and historical associations carried by source- and target-language expressions.

These findings refine the application of Venuti’s framework in two respects. First, domestication becomes most culturally consequential not simply when English prose is fluent, but when a familiar target-language category reorganizes, narrows, or obscures a source-specific network of relationships. Second, foreignization does not ensure cultural preservation when a retained term remains socially, historically, or institutionally opaque. The distinction between token and relational visibility consequently enables a more differentiated assessment of what survives translation: the visible presence of a cultural sign does not necessarily preserve the relationships through which that sign acquires meaning.

The conclusions are limited to 15 purposively selected passages. The study does not establish the numerical prevalence of particular translation procedures across the entire novel, determine Roberts’s intentions, or measure the responses of actual Anglophone readers. Its contribution is therefore interpretive rather than representative: it identifies a pattern in which Palestinian cultural signs remain visible more consistently than the institutional, symbolic, and social relationships they encode.

5.1 Implications

The study has theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. Theoretically, it suggests that domestication and foreignization should be applied to specific textual effects rather than treated as fixed labels for entire translations. A single rendering may be foreignizing at the lexical level but domesticating at the relational level, as occurs when an Arabic term is retained without sufficient contextual orientation. Conversely, a formally domesticating equivalent may preserve a significant cultural function when the target language provides a sufficiently close category.

Methodologically, the analysis demonstrates the importance of treating the contextualized source–target pair, rather than the isolated culture-specific item, as the unit of analysis. Examining a lexical item alone may overlook explanatory information provided by the surrounding passage or fail to reveal social and institutional relationships that disappear despite apparent semantic equivalence. Translation procedures should therefore be identified first and evaluated only after their contextual, pragmatic, and narrative effects have been considered.

The distinction between token and relational visibility may also be applied beyond *Time of White Horses* (2016). It offers a means of comparing translations that retain culturally marked vocabulary with translations that reconstruct cultural functions through target-language resources. This distinction is particularly relevant to literary works representing communities whose historical experience, political circumstances, and cultural institutions may be unfamiliar to international readers.

Practically, the findings support the selective use of concise intra-textual glossing. Where a culturally marked expression is central to the historical or institutional world of the narrative, combining retention with brief functional explanation may provide greater cultural access than either unexplained borrowing or complete substitution. Such contextualization is not necessary for every unfamiliar term, however. Close functional equivalents remain appropriate when the target language offers a comparable category and when backgrounded cultural dimensions are not consequential to the particular passage.

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