

## Research Article

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# Erotizing Nabokov's *Lolita* in Arabic: How Translation Strategies Shift Themes and Characterization of Literary Works

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**Abstract:** Given the conservative nature of Arab societies, Vladimir Nabokov's English novel *Lolita* (1955) poses considerable challenges to Arab translators because of its pornographic nature and controversial themes: pedophilia, incest, and young teenage sex. This study mainly examines the translation of *Lolita* by Mola with occasional references to Jubaili's translation of the novel. It also investigates the translation strategies employed by the two translators. The findings showed that Jubaili followed the literal approach of translation with no significant deviation from the novel's themes and characterization. On the other hand, Mola dysphemized the expressions and eroticized the events, which were more euphemistic in the original. Mola's utilization of some translation strategies such as omission, addition, and substitution affected the representation of the main characters, namely, Humbert (stepfather) and Lolita (stepdaughter), by shifting their roles as victim and victimizer, making Humbert's actions less culpable, and removing any traces of Lolita's innocence. In so doing, Mola reinforces sexual norms for young American women and diminishes the pedophile/incest angle. This study is significant, particularly within the context of translators' training and for those interested in literary translation.

**Keywords:** Lolita, Arabic, Taboo translation, translation strategies, translated literature

## Introduction

The cultural aspect of translation is important and cannot be neglected, and translators should consider differences between the source and target cultures (Al-Khalafat and Haider; Debbas and Haider). Western societies are perceived as more liberal in comparison to Arab ones, which are seen to be conservative (Haider et al.). This study examines two Arabic translations of Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita* (Nabokov). The novel was initially classified by many critics as pornographic due to its theme and content (Hepburn). The controversy around it stems mainly from its theme: a pedophilic, incestuous relationship between a 12-year-old girl and her stepfather, an unapologetic human predator who unregretfully speaks of his perverted lust for girls between 9 and 14 years of age (Meek). Consequently, the novel was initially banned in many Western and non-Western countries, including, but not limited to, France, England, Brazil, and the United States,

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where it was originally penned in 1955. Following the short-term ban, the novel was published in Paris, and versions in various languages subsequently followed (Ambrosiani).

Introducing texts, like *Lolita*, which break constraints imposed by taboo topics related to political, religious, and sexual ideologies in conservative societies like those in Arab countries through translation, usually incurs undesired consequences, the least of which would likely be the banning of its publication in the concerned society (Al-Saideen). While sexually explicit language might be tolerated to some extent in Arab countries (Haider and Hussein), incest and pedophilia are as unacceptable and strictly prohibited. Therefore, translating the novel into Arabic would expectedly require some translator's intervention that aims to achieve target text appropriateness and acceptability for the target audience. In such cases, translators are expected to employ translation techniques that purge such texts or at least mitigate their explicit language in attempts to avoid a violation of social constraints imposed by tabooed topics in the target society.

In this study, the researchers examine two Arabic translations of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, one is translated by Mola (2011) and the other is translated by Jubaili (2012). The study explores the translation strategies employed by the two translators and the impact of these strategies on the texts' production, as well as how the translators handled the controversial themes and explicit language of the source text in their target texts.

The current study attempts to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What are the translation strategies employed by Mola and Jubaili in rendering Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita* into Arabic?

**RQ2:** What is the impact of the translation strategies employed by Mola and Jubaili on the themes and characterization of the novel?

## Review of Related Literature

In this section, the researchers first discuss translation, taboos, and censorship in the Arab world and then survey the existing literature for similar studies.

### Theoretical Background

#### Translation and Taboos

According to Allan and Burridge, taboos, meaning "forbidden" in the languages of Polynesia, are formed due to social constraints on verbal and nonverbal human behavior related to bodies and their effluvia, sexual acts and organs, diseases and death, naming and viewing sacred persons and objects, and food gathering, preparation, and consumption that might be offensive or might cause discomfort to others. Once such constraints become well fixed and established in a society, people consciously and unconsciously obey them and avoid the topics and behaviors they prohibit. Adherence to such constraints stems from the belief that "people are at metaphysical risk when dealing with sacred persons, objects, and places; they are at physical risk from powerful earthly persons, dangerous creatures, and disease" (Allan and Burridge 1). People usually refrain from violating constraints imposed by taboos for fear of consequences that range from the mere expression of disapproval and social ostracism to bodily punishment, imprisonment, and sometimes illness and death. For instance, Igarashi Hitoshi, the Japanese translator of Salman Rushdy's *Satanic Verses*, was murdered in 1991, and other translators of this work were attacked and threatened (Reid).

To avoid such unsought consequences, people usually censor their linguistic behavior and thus avoid the use of taboo language and the discussion of taboo topics unless it is allowed in certain contexts and registers. Censored, euphemistic, or polite language becomes an unmarked human behavior aiming at maintaining the face of the speaker as well as that of the listeners or addressees, while impolite, dysphemistic, or offensive language becomes a marked linguistic behavior that aims at deliberately violating the face of the other.

Respecting taboos and the consequent censoring of language can even result in language change. This takes place when people adopt new expressions, invent new meanings or connotations for already existing expressions, or abandon older uses. Sex, which is a focal point in this article, is commonly a taboo topic in many societies. Therefore, when people are forced to bring up the topic, they avoid the use of expressions that explicitly refer to sexual acts, bodily discharges, and reproductive organs or private body parts. Instead, they employ alternative terms and highly connotative language that is understood by the conversation participants (Allan and Burridge).

Similarly, in translation, respecting taboos invites changes in the translated text to make its topic and language less shocking to the prospective reader. When obeying the social constraints of their societies, translators may resort to certain techniques that aim to expurgate the texts they are translating to lexical items that break those constraints (Merkle and Billiani). Translators usually employ a set of translation techniques for dealing with taboo topics to avoid unpleasant consequences or an anticipated negative reception of their translations. These include but are not limited to euphemization, substitution, and omission (Al-Zgoul and Al-Salman; Haider and Hussein). Euphemization involves the use of a more acceptable but relevant linguistic form in the target language in comparison to the taboo expression in the source language. An example is the use of the neutral Arabic word 'صديقه' (*friend*) instead of 'عشيقة' (*lover*) for the English word 'girlfriend.' Substitution refers to the use of an (irrelevant) alternate and acceptable expression in the target language for the taboo expression in the source text. For example, Arabic audiovisual subtitles on national channels usually use the word 'أبطال' (*Heroes*) or 'الكمبار' (*The Great*) for the word 'Gods' because the latter is unacceptable in monotheistic societies. And omission (or nontranslation) is when the translation of a source text taboo word or phrase does not appear at all in the translated text.

## Censorship in Arab Countries

Oral and textual violation of constraints imposed by political, religious, sex, or social taboos in Arab countries may result in serious consequences. Censorship, therefore, even self-censoring, in most Arab countries is a tool utilized to prevent the circulation of not only Arabic production but also translated works (Al-Qudah). Violation of taboos sometimes results in the ban of such works, imprisonment of their authors, or even worse scenarios. For example, the Saudi writer Rajaa Al Sanea's novel *Girls of Riyadh* was initially banned in Saudi Arabia on the grounds of violating prevailing social norms by bringing out to the public social topics that are only discussed within private feminine circles (Booth "The Muslim Woman" as Celebrity Author and the Politics of Translating Arabic: *Girls of Riyadh* Go on the Road"; Booth "Translator V. Author (2007) *Girls of Riyadh* Go to New York"). In another case, the Jordanian writer Nehez Hatter was assassinated in 2016 for violating religious taboos (Aljazeera).

With regard to translation, Allan and Burridge distinguish two types of expurgation, namely, censoring and censorship. Censoring refers to expurgation as a result of self-imposed compliance to social constraints, while censorship refers to institutionalized monitoring such as that imposed by the state. Therefore, writers and translators in Arab countries are expected to obey constraints imposed by taboo topics to avoid experiencing repercussions.

## Empirical Studies

Investigating strategies employed in translating literary works from English into Arabic and vice versa has attracted the attention of researchers over the years.

Alwafai conducted a study on two Arabic translations of the novella *The Old Man and the Sea* to find out the strategies employed in the process. The data were analyzed based on Baker's theory of equivalence at the

word level and equivalence at the collocation level. The findings showed that the strategies used the most to render the untranslatable culture-specific items were paraphrasing, rewording, and cultural adaptation.

In the same vein, Farghal and Bazzi examined the translation strategies employed in rendering English fiction titles into Arabic. One hundred English titles were collected and compared with their Arabic counterparts. The study revealed that literal translation was adopted when the title was lexically and culturally transparent, such as rendering “*Presumed Innocent*” into البريء المفترض. When the title included culture-bound references or allusions, adaptation seemed to be the most appropriate strategy as in rendering “*The Green Mile*” into اللحظة الأخيرة (Lit. *The Last Moment*). In some cases, titles were rendered in a more attractive way by using related words and explication, as in translating “*Slumdog Millionaire*” into المليونير المتشرد (Lit. *The Homeless Millionaire*). Flat and unnatural titles were produced when paraphrasing was used, as in rendering “*The Enemy*” into لا يمكنك الهروب من العدو (Lit. *you cannot flee from the enemy*). With proper nouns, transliteration seemed to work well but had to be supplemented by other procedures in some cases, such as descriptive phrases as in translating “*Christine*,” into كريستين: السيارة المسكونة (Lit. *Christine: The Haunted Car*).

Rahmani as well explored the rendition of Moroccan cultural terminologies into English in Leila Abouzeid’s novella, *Ām al-fil*. The study followed the approaches proposed by Newmark, Baker, and Ghazala. The results showed that these items were mostly replaced by cultural substitutes to familiarize the target readers with the source culture (SC), as in rendering لعبة الحجلة into “hopscotch.” In some cases, information was added as notes to facilitate the understanding of Moroccan culture-specific items to target readers. In the case of the nonlexicalization of some terms in the target language, the translator used more neutral/less expressive words by close alternatives or paraphrase even if they do not deliver the same meaning from source language (SL) into the target language (TL), as in translating the word النقاب into veil.

Similarly, Zayed *et al.* investigated the strategies used in translating the idiomatic expressions in the novel *Men in the Sun* from Arabic into English by adopting Baker’s and Newmark’s models. The study calculated the frequencies of each strategy to determine the mostly used in rendering the idioms in the novel. The results showed that paraphrasing was the highest in frequency and proved to be the most appropriate to render Arabic idioms into English, as in the Arabic idiom الأمر لا يد لي في، which was paraphrased in English as ‘*I have had no choice in the matter.*’ Moreover, literal translation and translating an idiom with a TL idiom that is similar in meaning but different in form were also employed, such as the Arabic idiom أنا عتيق في هذه الصنعة، which was translated into English as ‘*I am an old hand at this game.*’ Idioms that are similar in form and meaning were rarely used.

In the same token, Rababah and Al-Abbas explored the strategies adopted to overcome different translation constraints imposed in rendering the Arabic novel *Saq Al-Bambu* into English in light of Baker’s taxonomy. Examples were collected and categorized thematically into social, political, religious, and cultural constraints. The analysis showed that the translator used general terms to refer to specific concepts in the original novel, such as the word البومباي (Lit. *Bombay*), which was translated into ‘*the Indians.*’ Translation by omission was only used in rendering religious and cultural terms, as in the translation of ثلاثة مبشرين أمريكيين into ‘*three Americans.*’

Although there is a multitude of studies that investigated literary translations of different works, this study is different in that it examines the translation strategies employed in the translation of *Lolita* by Mola (2011) and Jubaili (2012) and how they handled the controversial themes in their target texts.

## Methodology

### Why Nabokov’s *Lolita*?

Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* was written in English in the United States in 1955, but it was banned from publication there for its pornographic and erotic nature. It was first published in Paris in 1955 and then appeared in New York in 1958 and in London in 1959. It soon acquired its status as a classic and was

translated into other languages. The novel is narrated in the first person by the main character Humbert, a French professor of literature, who is described by critics as unreliable, and who passionately details his obsession and sexual encounters with *Lolita* (Hepburn).

The content and taboo themes in this novel (e.g., pedophilia, incest, and adolescent sexuality) have generated controversy from the beginning, even within its source culture. *Lolita* was banned for different periods of time in many countries, including Arab and Islamic states like Iran, where violation of social constraints can incur strong penalties. In fact, Azar Nafisi, an Iranian female writer and university professor, describes in her memoir *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2004) how she and a group of her students risked their lives by defying the authorities and breaking religious and social constraints when they gathered at her house to read forbidden Western classics, including Nabokov's masterpiece, *Lolita* (Tymoczko).

The disagreeable nature of *Lolita's* themes and content, which made it repulsively intolerable in Western, as well as Arab and Islamic societies, might be best described in *The New Yorker* by Malcolm:

It is the horrific rather than the comic aspect of the novel that has captured critical attention. This is not surprising, since Mr. Nabokov has coolly prodded one of the few remaining raw nerves of the twentieth century ... he (the modern reader) is apt to find himself wholly disconcerted by Mr. Nabokov's restrained and witty chronicle of the lust of a man for a child. Such a lust, it must be admitted, is monstrous.

In the novel, there are two main characters, namely, Humbert and Lolita. A brief description of the two is outlined below:

- Humbert is an erudite, mentally unstable, talented British professor of French literature who is, beyond control, sexually obsessed with minor girls, whom he calls “nymphets.” He is exceptionally charming, sarcastic, and endowed with an enticing, extraordinary linguistic competence that makes him seductive, as much to his readers as to other characters.
- Lolita (Humbert's pet name for Dolores Haze) is a stereotypical stubborn 12-year-old American girl who reminds Humbert of his childhood crush. Although she is not exceptionally beautiful nor charming, she remains his favorite type of girl with her skinny arms, freckled face, vulgar language, and unladylike behavior.

## Investigated Translations

In this study, the researchers examine two Arabic versions of the novel; one published in 2011 by Osama Publishing House in Damascus, translated by Ali Mola, and the other published in 2012 by Al-Jamal Publishing House in Beirut, translated by Khalid Jubaili.

To the best of our knowledge, no prior research, or any other kind of feedback, has been done on these Arabic translations, which grants this study its importance. No information could be found regarding sales, readership, or the reception of these translations in the Arab world. Only at the end of his translation does Mola provide an afterword, an Arabic message to the reader in which he states that “the novel is just a love story which hypocrites find shameful and intimidating, whereas it is nothing but a real story full of all sentiments of love ... a unique work ... that places lovers under social examination like other classical love couples.”

## Research Procedures

The researchers carefully and thoroughly read the English version of the novel and spotted the scenes that might be controversial in Arab society. Then, they examined how these scenes were rendered in the two versions of the translation. The source text examples are extracted from the English edition published in 1991, called *The Annotated Lolita*. Focus is placed on scenes with erotic content and stretches of speech

describing Humbert's fantasies about Lolita. The examples are categorized according to the translation strategies employed in rendering the concerned scenes. They are then examined for the purpose of how they are dealt with in the translation. The translations of Mola and Jubaili are compared to highlight their approach and strategies for converting the text into Arabic.

## Analysis and Findings

This section demonstrates the translation strategies employed by Mola and Jubaili.

### Omission

Omission, as a translation strategy, is proposed by different theorists for different purposes. Nida, for example, suggests using it to avoid redundancy. Newmark proposes the utilization of this strategy to cater to target reader preferences and for the sake of clarity and brevity. Omission is the most frequently used strategy in Mola's translation when compared to that of Jubaili (Table 1).

In his translation, Jubaili proves very loyal to the source text. He rarely employs omission, and when he occasionally does, his omissions are limited to single words and phrases, as Example 12 in Table 1 shows, with no significant impact on the understanding of the novel, nor on the characterization of its main characters.

Mola, on the other hand, employs omission on a wide scale. His omissions range from single words (Examples 1–3) to short phrases (Examples 4–7) to complete passages (Examples 8–11). In Example 1, Humbert threatens Lolita that if she left him, she would be taken to a foster home where she would be given "rancid pancakes," using the word "rancid" to beg a repulsed and a subsequent submissive reaction from Lolita. Mola deleted "rancid" and rendered the word "pancakes" as *قطائف*, which is a loveable kind of Arab desert. Such deletion and substitution would hardly produce the repulsive effect aimed at in the source text.

Another example is the word "nymphet" (Example 2). Humbert repeatedly uses this word to denote his favorite type of girl between 9 and 14 years of age. This recurring presence of the term demonstrates Humbert's pedophilic, perverted nature (his sexual attraction and obsession with 9- to 14-year-old girls). Deleting the term on occasions and adding *مسعورات* (*Lit. rabid*) to it on other occasions help diminish such characterization of Humbert and consequently shift the sexual obsession from Humbert to those nymphets. Jubaili, on the other hand, renders both Examples 1 and 2 literally as *فطائر فاسدة* (*rancid pancakes*) and *حورية* (*nymphet*) consecutively.

Examples of longer omissions are the French phrases and sentences that Humbert uses every now and then to show off his European origin and education (see Examples 4–6). This frequent code-switching is a factor that contributes to the building of Lolita's rejection of Humbert in the later weeks of their relationship. While Mola deletes most of these phrases (Examples 4 and 5), he does translate some (Example 6). But when he does, he keeps the Arab reader unaware of their French origin, thus deleting a critical layer of their meaning. While the foreignness of these phrases is evident in the English text (making Humbert's self-pride more evident), their obscured foreignness in Arabic may conceal Lolita's gradual rejection of Humbert.

Similarly, Jubaili literally translates the French elements into Arabic, but without noting they are French. He also employs transliteration in rendering some foreign words (see Examples 3 and 4). Example 7 shows phrases that are deleted by Mola but retained by Jubaili. Their deletion significantly affects Lolita's characterization as a child.

Longer multi-page passages are completely struck out. Chapter 30, where Humbert rambles on about how he would decorate the walls of the hotel dining room where he once stayed with Lolita, is completely deleted (Example 8). Other passages (Examples 9–11), including Lolita's class name list, which Humbert views as a poem, Lolita's long talk about her camp activities, and whole paragraphs describing places, events, or people are also deleted or significantly downsized. Talking about Lolita's class name list

Table 1: Examples of the translation strategy of “omission”

No.	Nabokov	Mola	Jubaili
1	– ... and have <b>rancid</b> pancakes on Sundays	∅ وحيث تحصلين يوم الاحد فقط على القطائف ... and have pancakes on Sundays ...	وتناولين فطائر فاسدة and have <b>rancid</b> pancakes on Sundays
2	– ‘ <b>nymphet</b> ’	<b>Occasionally not translated</b>	حورية nymphet
3	– ‘ <b>seraphs</b> ’	<b>No translation</b>	<u>الساروفيم</u> <b>seraphs</b>
4	Out of the lawn, bland Mrs. Haze, complete with camera, grew up like a fakir's fake tree, and after some heliotropic fussing – sad eyes up, glad eyes down – had the cheek of taking my picture as I sat blinking on the steps, <b>Humbert le Bel</b> .	<b>No translation</b>	همبرت لو بيل Humbert, the handsome
5	– (p. 167) ‘ <b>c’est tout</b> ’	<b>No translation</b>	‘هذا كل شيء’
6	<b>French phrases:</b> Translated without noting they are French:- Tant pis mes malheurs pot-au-feu	انت حر مصائبى الجو العائلى As you like My misfortunes Family atmosphere	انا اسفة مصائبى الجو العائلى Too bad My misfortunes Family atmosphere
7	...and the seaside of her <b>schoolgirl thighs. Silently, the seventh-grader</b> enjoyed her green-red-blue comics.	No translation	<u>وملتقى فخذيهما، فخذى...</u> <u>التلميذة</u> ... <u>وبصمت، راحت تلميذة الصف السابع</u> تنظر بامعان بمتعة عارمة الى الرسوم الهزلية <u>...and the intersection of her thighs,</u> <u>the thighs of the female student. Silently,</u> <u>the seventh grader</u> was looking at the comics with great pleasure...
8	Part 1. Chapter 30, p. 151	<b>No translation (one page omitted)</b>	Literal translation Same as the source text
9	Part 1. Chapter 11, pp. 53–57 “Names ... Hamilton, Mary Rose Haze, Dolores Honeck, Rosaline Names ... ... Haze, Dolores” (she!) in its special bower of names, with its bodyguard of roses – a fairy princess between her two maids of honor...”	The three pages are reduced to the following paragraph: الخميس – رأيت فى أحد كتب لوليتا قائمة باسماة جميع تلميذات وتلاميذ صفها، بدت لى القائمة ... مثل قصيدة شعر تهزج بجمال لوليتا الصف تقضم طرف قلمها وتصورت لوليتا فى وتستجلب كره المعلمة بينما انصبت الرصاصى جميع نظرات الاولاد على شعرها وعنقها <b>Thursday</b> – I saw in one of Lolita's books a list of all the students in her class. The list seemed to me like a poem that chants about Lolita's beauty... and I pictured Lolita in class biting the tip of her pencil and invoking the teacher's hate while all the children's eyes were on her hair and neck.	Literal translation same as the source text

(Continued)

Table 1: Continued

No.	Nabokov	Mola	Jubaili
10	Part 2. Chapter 3, pp. 188–189	No Translation except for this paragraph “لقد كنت أتصرف معها تصرف الاب الطبيعي فأخذها لنزهات برينة وللسينما وأحيانا للمطاعم والمكتبات ... وأحادثها كما يحادث الاب ابنة ملزم بمرافقتها.” I was acting with her like a normal father, taking her on innocent picnics and to the cinema, and sometimes to diners and libraries ... and speaking to her like a father committed to accompanying his daughter	Literal translation No omission Same as the source text
11	Chapter 22, pp. 261–262	No translation except for this paragraph “ذهبت أجول في المرافق التي كنت قد زرتها مع لوليتا مدفوعا بذلك الحافز الغريب الذي لا أستطيع تفسير طبيعته.” Driven by a curious urge, I went wandering through the places I had visited with Lolita	Literal translation No omission Same as the source text
12	“Are you sure,” I said at last, “that she will be happy there?” ( <b>lame, lamentably lame!</b> )	هل انت متأكدة من انها ستكون سعيدة هناك! (يا لهذا السؤال الاعرج). Are you sure she will be happy there? ( <b>Oh, that lame question</b> ).	قلت أخيرا: هل انت متأكدة من انها ستكون سعيدة هناك؟ Finally, I said: Are you sure she will be happy there? <b>Ø</b>

(Example 9) shows how insanely obsessed he was, not only with her body but even with her name. These omissions drastically impact the characterization of Humbert’s and Lolita’s personalities, diminishing Humbert’s depravity and boosting Lolita’s playfulness as a teenager.

On occasions, long passages are reduced to a simple sentence (Example 10). Humbert’s long retelling of the efforts he exerted and the pains he endured to appear like a normal father in people’s eyes, such as seeing Lolita off to school, dining out with her, taking her to the dentist, and other father–daughter activities, is reduced to one sentence.

On another occasion, Humbert, having lost Lolita and is now traveling with a girl called Rita, describes over two pages his passing through Briceland, where he had stopped with Lolita a year before at the “The Enchanted Hunters” hotel, to relive the time he spent with her. This description shows how desperate he is to see her again. This is reduced to a simple sentence, as Example 11 shows.

Jubaili, on the other hand, proves loyal to the source text, rendering these passages literally with extreme caution in order not to mess with or make changes to the target text. Very rarely, Jubaili employs omission in his translation, as Example 12 shows. However, such sporadic deletions do not affect the events of the novel, nor the characterization of Humbert and Lolita, in the manner Mola skillfully employs this technique.

## Addition

Addition is a translation strategy whereby translators add extra words, phrases, or sentences to the target text that are not part of the source text (ST), as Dickins et al. suggest.

While Jubaili does not employ this strategy in his version of *Lolita*, Mola, on many occasions, adds words and phrases that are not in the ST, aiming to shift attention from the novel’s pedophilic and incestuous theme by deliberately violating the sex taboo and making the novel more erotic. As Example 13 in Table 2 shows, when Lolita accidentally hits her mother with a tennis ball and apologizes, “Pardonnez, Mother. I was not aiming at you,” Humbert remarks “Of course not, my hot downy darling.” Mola, to portray Lolita as playful and manipulative, adds the phrase *كانت الجنية تقصدني* (*Lit. The playful nymph was aiming at me*), which is not in the source text.



Table 2: Examples of the translation strategy of "addition"

Nabokov	Mola	Jubaili
13 (ST. p. 59)	(p. 66)	وفى هذه اللحظة، وثبت فوقها كرة تنس ... رمادية قديمة، وجاء صوت "لو" من البيت فائلة بغطرس: "اسفة يا أمي، لم أقصد أن أصيبك." بالطبع لا، يا حبيبتي الشيقة التي يكسو جسدك الزغب
... and presently an old gray tennis ball bounced over her, and Lo's voice came from the house haughtily: " Pardonnez, Mother. I was not aiming at <i>you</i> . <b><u>Of course not, my hot downy darling.</u></b>	وفجأة وقعت عليها طابة تنس قديمة غبراء ... ووسمعتنا صوت لوليتا ضاحكا:  العفو يا ماما لم أكن أقصدك.  بالطبع لم تقصدها فقد  كانت الجنية اللعوب تقصدني.  ... suddenly an old, dusty tennis ball fell on her... and we heard Lolita's laughing voice: Sorry, Mama, I didn't mean you. Of course, you didn't mean her. <b><u>The playful nymphet was aiming at me.</u></b>	...and at this moment, an old gray tennis ball passed over her, and Lo's voice came from the house haughtily, "Sorry, Mom, I didn't mean to hit you." <b><u>Of course not, my hot downy darling.</u></b>
14 (p. 44)	(p. 52)	(p. 60)
a) She was the loveliest <b><u>nymphet</u></b> green-red-blue Priap himself could think up.	كانت أجمل <u>حورية</u> <u>مراهقة</u> واذ كنت ألثمهما بنراتي ... عبر الوهج الشمسي وشفتاي الجافتان تعكسان ... شبقى اليها ...she was the prettiest <b><u>teenage nymphet</u></b> , and as I devoured her with my eyes through the sun's glare, and my dry lips reflecting my lust for her, ...	كانت أجمل وأروع <u>حورية</u> ملونة بالازرق والاحمر والاخضر يمكن أن تخطر "لبرياب".  She was the most beautiful and the most beautiful <b><u>nymphet</u></b> , colored in blue, red, and green, that Priap could think of.
(p. 45)	(p. 54)	(p. 62)
b) I am not used to being with <b><u>nymphets</u></b> , damn it.	... فلم أتعود أن أكون على مقربة من <u>الحوريات</u> <u>المسعودات</u> ... I am not used to being close to <b><u>rabid nymphets</u></b> ...	لم أعتد على أن أكون في وسط <u>حوريات</u> ، اللعنة. I'm not used to being among <b><u>nymphets</u></b> , damn it.
15 I was considerably amused by certain remarkable sexual habits that the good Harold Haze had had, according to Charlotte, who thought my mirth improper.	ولقد وجدت تسلية كبرى في التعرف على بعض العادات الجنسية الملحوظة، التي كانت شارلوت قد اكتسبتها. فقد كانت عادات <u>جديّة</u> وكانت تعتبر عبثي غير لائق.	وكنت أجد متعة كبيرة عندما كانت شارلوت تردد على مسامعي الاوضاع الجنسية اللذيذة التي كان المرحوم هارولد هايز يمارسها معها، وكانت ترى أن البهجة والمتعة اللتين كنت ابديهما وهي تروي لي ذلك، ليستا محتشمتين I found great pleasure when Charlotte recounted to me the lovely sexual positions that the late Harold Hayes practiced with her, and she thought that the joy and pleasure which I was showing when she told me this were indecent.
	I found great amusement in getting acquainted with some of the remarkable	

(Continued)

Table 2: Continued

Nabokov	Mola	Jubaili
	sexual habits which Charlotte had acquired. <b>They were serious habits,</b> and she considered my playfulness improper.	
16 I was not even Lolita's first lover ...	بل لم أكن العاشق الأول الذي ضاجع لوليتا  I wasn't the first lover <b>who fucked Lolita ...</b>	لم أكن أنا أول عشيق لها I was not her first lover ... ..

In addition, almost every occurrence of the word “nymphet” is associated in Mola’s version with the adjective مسعورة (*Lit. sexually wild or rabid*), and occasionally with the word المراهقة (teenage) in the Arabic text, as shown by examples 14 a and b. This association, which is maintained in Mola’s version, shifts the connotative meaning of the word “nymphet” from a chaste spiritual creature, as implied by Islamic tradition, to a wild female driven by sexual desire. Such lexical choices make Mola’s intentions more noticeable.

Example 15 is another instance of the addition strategy employed by Mola. As Charlotte, Lolita’s mother, recites to Humbert some sexual habits she had with her late husband, Mola adds the phrase فقد كانت عادات جدية (*Lit. they were serious habits*), emphasizing their importance. Furthermore, as Example 16 shows, Mola adds the phrase الذي ضاجع لوليتا (*who fucked Lolita*), which is not part of the ST.

## Dysphemism

Dysphemism, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is the utilization of a disagreeable, offensive, or a disparaging expression instead of an agreeable or inoffensive one. While translators usually apply euphemism when translating texts loaded with tabooed topics and language from a liberal society into more conservative society, Mola, counter to expectations, applies dysphemism in his translation, thus shifting the source text euphemistic language into a more sexually explicit one.

The examples in Table 3 show how Jubaili consistently abides by his literal translation method while Mola opts for dysphemism. In Example 17, the phrase “sparing her purity” is rendered by Mola as على ان لا أدنس عمليا بكاريتها (*Lit. not to practically defile her hymen ...*), and by so doing, a more erotic layer of meaning is added, and the defloration act is summoned in the reader’s imagination. Similarly, in Example 18, the phrase ‘Restraint and reverence (with Lolita) were still my motto’ is rendered as أجل أنا لن أضاجعها مضاجعة كاملة (*Lit. Yes, I’m not going to fuck her completely*). Such rendering, in addition to repeatedly rendering the words “purity” and “chastity” (Example 19) here and elsewhere in the novel as عذريتها/virginity, aims at making the Arabic text even more erotic.

Dysphemistic use of many expressions evidently serves the translator’s purpose of making the novel more sexually inviting and making Lolita seem more complicit, more sexualized, and less of a victim. As mentioned earlier, instead of literally rendering the recurrent words in Example 19 “chastity and purity” literally as طهارتهن (*purity*), Mola uses the more erotic words عذريتهن أو بكارتهن (*Lit. their virginity or hymen*).

Similarly, in Example 20, Mola translates the sentence “The rapist was Charlie Holmes” as ان الذي انتهك عذارها اجراميا هو تشارلي هولمز (*Lit. The one who illegally breached her hymen was Charlie Holmes*), thus avoiding the use of the word مغتصب (*Lit. rapist*), which in Arabic directs the reader’s attention to the violent part of the act rather than its sexual side and replacing it with the phrase “breached her hymen,” which is more suggestive. By so doing, Mola manages to remove the violence from the act, and generate the image of breaching Lolita’s hymen in the reader’s mind, instead.

Table 3: Examples of the translation strategy of “Dysphemism”

	Nabokov	Mola	Jubaili
17	"I was still firmly <b>resolved to pursue my policy of sparing her purity</b> ," ...	"ذلك انتي كنت قد صممت على ان لا أدنس" <u>عمليا بكارتها</u> Because I was determined not to <b>practically defile her hymen ...</b>	كنت لا ازال عازما بحزم على مواصلة سياستي ... الرامية الى الحفاظ على طهارتها My policy is to <b>preserve her purity</b>
18	<b>Restraint and reverence (with Lolita)</b> were still my motto	"أجل أنا لن أضاجعها مضاجعة كاملة" "Yes, I'm not going <b>to fuck her completely.</b> "	وكنت حريصا على التشبث بشعارين رئيسيين هما <u>تمالك نفسي والحفاظ على وقاري</u> I was keen to cling to two main slogans: <b>self-control and maintaining my dignity</b>
19	<b>chastity</b> and purity	<u>عذريتهن وبكارتهن</u> their <b>virginity</b> and chastity	<u>عفة وطهارة</u> <b>chastity and purity</b>
20	The <b>rapist</b> was Charlie Holmes	ان الذي انتهك عذارها اجراميا هو تشارلي هولمز هولمز The one who <b>criminally violated her virginity</b> was Charlie Holmes	ان <u>المغتصب الحقيقي</u> هو تشارلي هولمز The real <b>rapist</b> is Charlie Holmes
21	.. when a <b>brute of forty</b> ...	... <u>يعمد عتل زميم</u> في الأربعين من عمره ... when a <b>massive intrusive bastard</b> at the age of forty	<u>A violent رجل عنيف</u> في الأربعين من العمر <b>man</b> in his forties .....

On another occasion, and to portray a “brute of forty” (Example 21) marrying a very young girl in the ugliest possible way, Mola renders the word “brute” using the two adjectives عتل زميم (*Lit. a massive intrusive bastard*), which are part of a Quranic verse, to describe the staunchest enemy of Prophet Mohammad. The words not only describe the beastly nature of the man but also characterize him as a child of adultery and bring forth the image of the historically hated infidel in Arab Islamic culture, which transcends the connotations of “brute.” By accentuating Humbert’s disfavor of such an act, Mola endows him with an image of a more decent man.

## Substitution

Substitution is a translation strategy whereby an expression or a phrase in the source text is replaced by another in the target text. Baker calls it cultural substitution, which involves replacing a culturally specific item with a target language, one that has the same impact on the target reader, making the target text more natural, familiar, and understandable. However, examples in Table 4 show that substitution, particularly as employed by Mola, serves other purposes than achieving familiarity and facilitating comprehension of the target text.

Table 4 shows a few of the numerous examples of substitution, particularly in Mola’s translation. While Jubaili upholds his policy of loyalty to the source text, Mola utilizes the strategy of substitution to a great extent. Examples 22–25 in Table 4 show how literal Jubaili’s rendering is, thus maintaining Nabokov’s repulsive incestuous and pedophilic themes. Mola, on the other hand, changes “pollutive dreams” into الاستمناية احلامي (*masturbatory dreams*), as in Example 22; “child” in Example 23 becomes “teenager”; Lolita’s “childish fidgeting” becomes “responsive fooling around” and “feel her skin through her boy’s shirt” becomes “my hands could run under her pants to feel her soft skin” in Example 24, and all the metaphoric descriptions of menstruation in Example 25 are turned into mother nature pushing Lolita “down the path of the mysteries of pleasure and sexuality.”

With these and many other similar substitutions, Mola distances his translation from the ST’s incestuous and pedophilic themes toward a more pornographic theme by introducing explicitly more erotic expressions and phrases into his text, thus making it more inviting and less revolting to the Arab reader. He creates sensual scenes by turning Lolita’s childish actions into playful manipulations of an innocent old man, thus switching their roles as victim and victimizer.

Table 4: Examples of the translation strategy of “Substitution”

Nabokov	Mola	Jubaili
22 The dimmest of my <b>pollutive</b> dreams was a thousand times ...	وهكذا فقد كانت اكثر احلامى الاستمناية ابهاما ... ادعى لخلب العقول Thus, the most deceptive of my <b>masturbatory</b> dreams was also mind-blowing...	... ان اشد احلامى ظلما وبيداء My darkest and most <b>obscene</b> dreams...
23 It was the same <b>child</b>	أجل انها انابيل بالذات. <u>مراهقة الرفييرا</u> Yes, it was Annabelle, the Riviera <b>teenager</b> .	كانت <u>الطفلة</u> نفسها It was the same <b>child</b>
24 <b>She, too, fidgeted a good deal</b> so that finally, her mother told her sharply to quit it and sent the doll flying into the dark, and I laughed and addressed myself to Haze across Lo's legs to let my hand creep up my nymphet's thin back and <b>feel her skin through her boy's shirt...</b>	اما هي فقد كانت متجاوبة معي في هذا العبت ولكن لما اكثر من دلعتها امرتها امها بالعودة الى البيت وفذفت باللعة الى الفضاء. اما انا فقد ضحكت وتوجهت بالكلام الى امها عبر ساقى لوليتا حتى <u>تستطيع يدي ان تدب تحت سروالها لتحسس جلدنا الناعم</u> As for her, <b>she was responsive to me in this fooling around</b> , but when she fidgeted too much, her mother ordered her to go in, and she threw the toy into space. As for me, I laughed and spoke to her mother through Lolita's legs so that <b>my hands could run under her pants to feel her soft skin....</b>	كانت كثيرة التمللم والحركة الى درجة ان امها طلبت منها بحدة، أخيرا، ان تتوقف عن اللعب وألقت بالدمية في الظلام. ضحكت وتوجهت بالحديث الى السيدة هايز من وراء ساقى لو، وتركت يدي تنسل فوق ظهر الحورية الرقيق، ورحت انحسس بشرتها <u>الناعمة من خلال قميصها الصياني</u> . She <b>fidgeted</b> a lot that her mother asked her sharply, finally, to stop playing, and she threw the doll into the dark. I laughed and turned to speak to Mrs. Hayes from behind Lu's legs, letting my hands sneak over the nymphet's delicate back, and groping her soft skin through her <b>boyish shirt</b> .
25 Has she already been initiated by mother nature to <b>the Mystery of the Menarche? Bloated feelings. The Curse of the Irish. Falling from the roof. Grandma is visiting.</b>  "Mr. Uterus [I quote from a girls' magazine ...]"	انتى لاتساءل اذا كانت امنا الطبيعة قد بدأت تعمل عملها في جسد لوليتا وتدفعها الى طريق اسرار <u>اللذة والجنس؟</u> I wonder if Mother Nature has begun to do her work in Lolita's body, pushing her down <b>the path of the mysteries of pleasure and sexuality.</b>	هل بدأت تحيض؟ تلك المشاعر المتورمة. لعنة الايرلنديين. السقوط من السطح. الجدة في زيارة ويبدأ السيد الرحم [أقتبس من مجلة ...] للفتيات Has she started menstruating? Those swollen feelings. The curse of the Irish, falling off the surface. Grandmother is visiting and Mr. Uter begins [I quote from a girls' magazine] ...

## Discussion and Findings

The aforementioned examples and the accompanying analysis demonstrate the use of the translation strategies as employed by Mola and Jubaili and provide insights regarding their consequent effects on the overall understanding of the novel, its themes, and the characterization of its two main characters. Since Jubaili's translation is literal throughout and his translatorial interventions are only out of linguistic necessity, the following discussion will be limited to Mola's extensive interventions.

Mola's utilization of the earlier discussed translation strategies results in transforming Nabokov's revolting and nauseating themes (incest and pedophilia) into comparatively more acceptable themes (seduction and eroticism), making the target text more inviting to the Arab target reader.

Comparing the English *Lolita* to Mola's Arabic translation reveals a considerable number of places where Mola proves disloyal to the source text, effecting interventions through translation strategies such as omission, addition, substitution, and dysphemism. Surprisingly, none of these interventions were done in the name of obeying social constraints on sex as a taboo topic in Arab societies. Indeed, the comparison shows that the translator exerts no efforts to purge the novel of expressions, sentences, or passages that include sexual content that might be seen as disruptive or repulsive to Arab readers. No attempt was made by Mola to protect those readers against the cultural shock or, in Hugo's words, the disruptive or violent nature of translation (Lefevere). What he did was quite the opposite. In fact, Nabokov's lexical choices, compared to Mola's, are euphemistic in general. The changes made by Mola pertaining to sexual content make the novel even more obscene and more violating to social norms. While Nabokov's language is euphemistic in general, Mola makes it more erotic: "chastity and purity" become *virginity*/عذريه, and "session" becomes *having sex*/يضاغع.

Utilizing these translation strategies serves the purpose of changing the characterization of both Humbert and Lolita and their relationship, which eventually contributes to changing its themes. To achieve this, Mola, with the help of the examined strategies, exploits a stereotypically exaggerated image of sexually liberated American women constructed in Arab culture in cinema and TV, depicting Lolita as manipulative and seductive and Humbert as only responding to such manipulation and seduction.

Therefore, by dysphemizing and eroticizing the events and the language used to describe them, which in the original is euphemistic, the translation seems to make Humbert's actions less culpable while removing traces of Lolita's innocence. It breaks language taboos by using taboo words for sex, but in so doing, it also reinforces sexual norms for young American women and diminishes the pedophile/incest angle in the novel.

The changes affected by Mola contribute to the shift in the characterization of Humbert and Lolita. The presence of the deleted parts in the source text accentuates the incestuousness of Humbert's attraction to Lolita and thus provides an extra layer of taboo. Excluding those parts in the translation, on the other hand, diminishes Humbert's depraved nature and, at the same time, caters to the target reader's preferences. The Arabic reader, therefore, will not be able to fully construct an image of Humbert like the one Nabokov draws as a psychologically twisted and perverted old man who is insanely and lustfully in love with little "nymphets" (as Humbert calls them) embodied by the 12-year-old Dolores Haze, or Lolita, after becoming imprisoned in his teenage memories when his girlfriend dies before he has full sexual intercourse with her.

Similarly, deletions and additions of parts related to Lolita reduce the possibility of perceiving her as a child who views sex as a game between kids with which adults have nothing to do. Furthermore, the target reader's understanding of the kind and amount of Humbert's love, or debauchery, for Lolita and hatred towards her mother is thwarted when some passages are deleted.

Moreover, Nabokov plays with the reader's tendency and desire to identify with a first-person protagonist, but with this tendency comes the discomfort that is built into the novel, resulting from the moral reluctance to identify with Humbert. The translation, on the other hand, seems to make such identification a little less nauseating. All of the omissions and editing did to the translation put together make it possible for the Arabic reader to identify positively with Humbert without the moral repulsion one gets from any feeling of identifying with him in the original.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

As is usually the case, translating from a liberal into a more conservative society demands purging the source text of any elements that may violate social constraints in the receiving society. To that end, translators usually employ a set of translation strategies whereby they achieve their goals. In his

translation, and counter to expectations, Mola successfully employed a set of translation strategies that turned the target text more erotic. With the help of those strategies, he also managed to change the characterization of the two main characters, switching their roles as victim and victimizer. This change resulted in a thematic change from incest and pedophilia to seduction and eroticism, which in turn made the target text less disturbing than the ST.

Mola's version of *Lolita*, if we think traditionally of translation as producing an exact copy of the source text, would be judged as suffering a great loss. But since this view has been challenged by many theorists, earlier and contemporary, this translation can be deemed acceptable as a reproduction targeting a different audience, aiming to produce a different effect. Lefevere calls such reproductions "rewritings or refractions," which he defines as adapting a literary work to a different audience in an attempt to influence the way in which they read that work. Refractions represent a compromise between two systems and indicate dominant constraints in each one. If refractions, with all the changes, bowdlerizing, and restructuring of the source text, are accepted as part of the literary system into which they are imported, they would provide a new life for the source text in a different domain, including the target literary system, where they serve new purposes by providing it with new material: cultural and linguistic.

In Mola's case, the constraints governing the production of *Lolita* may pertain to the Arab reader's preferences (potentially a smaller number of pages); the translator's own ideology, if not influenced by another regulatory body in the target society or culture; or a patron who has the upper hand, such as a publisher who must cater to the prospective sales and market demands. While Nabokov penned the novel to address the American reader, Mola translated it to serve a different audience in a completely different culture, where it may have been accepted or rejected on different grounds, interests, and attractions.

It can be inferred that the circulation of this translation, which challenges dominating Arab social and religious norms, indicates that a more relaxed mode of censorship in some Arab countries may be evolving regarding the sex taboo while upholding stricter constraints on political and religious topics. This may be a consequence of introducing the Internet into Arab societies, or at least it may have played a significant role in bringing it about, in addition to the role played by privately owned satellite channels, particularly those broadcasting from outside the relevant country.

Since no paratexts or reviews regarding this translation were found, the interventions made by the translator may reflect his or the publisher's intentions. To cater to the preferences of the Arab reader – fewer pages and more taboo violations – Mola may have aimed at making the Arabic version of *Lolita* more attractive. He reduced the size of the text by omitting words, sentences, and passages he deemed unimportant to the theme and main events of the novel. However, he also added elements such as the cover photo, the subtitle, and lexical items that made the novel more erotic, thus prioritizing materiality over aesthetics.

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