**Research Article**

# TRANSLATING TRAUMA: A BOURDIEUSIAN ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATOR AGENCY IN THE VIRGIN OF SINJAR 'ATHRAA SINJAR' سنجار عذراء

**Linguistics**

**Keywords:** translator agency, Bourdieu, habitus, illusio, symbolic violence, Yazidi women, trauma translation.

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**Abstract**

This paper employs Pierre Bourdieu's sociological framework to examine the translator's role in mediating symbolic power through six selected Arabic excerpts from سنجار عذراء (Athraa Sinjar). Two passages were chosen for each of three thematic clusters: (1) symbolic power and mass obedience.(2) dehumanization of Yazidi women, and (3) physical violence, and translated into English for close textual analysis. The study explores how the translator's habitus informs linguistic choices, how varying forms of capital (cultural, social, symbolic) shape translation decisions, and how illusio guides the emotional and ethical investments underpinning translation practices. Through this reflexive analysis, the paper illuminates the translator as an agent navigating the literary field, negotiating power relations, and shaping the novel's insertion into global discourses on minority trauma and cultural representation. The study contributes to translation sociology by offering a model for integrating translator agency with textual practice.

## INTRODUCTION TO CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The suffering, identity issues, and gender-based violence that happen under ISIS authority make it a good place to study translation as a site of sociopolitical conflict. Rather than perceiving translation as a neutral linguistic transfer, this study adopts Pierre Bourdieu's sociological framework to reframe the translator as a socially situated agent embedded in a dynamic literary field (Bourdieu, 1993; Inghilleri, 2005). By mobilising Bourdieu's core concepts—field, habitus, capital, and illusio—the translator is understood not as a passive conduit, but as an active participant whose interpretive and stylistic choices are shaped by their position within power-laden structures of recognition, legitimacy, and symbolic authority.

A Bourdieusian approach allows us to interrogate how translation is conditioned by the hierarchies of the literary field, including institutional affiliations, publication venues, and the socio-political capital accrued by certain narratives and languages (Simeoni, 1998; Gouanvic, 2005). The translator's bilingual and bicultural habitus, forged through cumulative life experiences and linguistic exposure, informs lexical or syntactic decisions and ethical investments, narrative empathy, and resistance to dominant discourses. These affective investments can be conceptualised through illusio—the belief in the stakes of the game—which shapes how translators emotionally and ideologically commit to the act of translation (Inghilleri, 2011).

Such a perspective has gained increasing traction in translation sociology, particularly in studies examining translators' agency in politically contested contexts, their negotiation of symbolic capital, and their mediation of trauma and voice in post-conflict literature (Wolf, 2007; Sela-Sheffy, 2005). Applying this framework to Athraa Sinjar enables an exploration of how translation becomes a form of ethical representation, cultural resistance, and discursive intervention in the global field of literary production.

**Research Questions**

This study seeks to investigate the translator's agency through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's sociological framework by addressing the following interrelated questions:

1. How does the translator's habitus influence the rendering of ideologically charged themes such as obedience, objectification, and violence?

This question explores how the translator's internalised dispositions—shaped by their social and linguistic upbringing—affect their interpretive choices when translating scenes laden with symbolic power.

2. What forms of capital (e.g., cultural capital through paratexts or symbolic capital through stylistic decisions) are mobilised in the translation process, and how do they inform the translator's strategy?

Here, the focus is on how translators draw upon various forms of capital to enhance the authority, accessibility, or impact of the translated text.

3. In what ways does illusio—the translator's emotional, ethical, and cognitive investment in the text—manifest in their decision-making?

This question addresses the affective dimension of translator agency, examining how commitment to the narrative's stakes shapes linguistic and cultural choices.

4. How do habitus, capital, and illusio interact to determine the translated text's position within the broader literary field?

This final question synthesises the components of Bourdieu's framework to assess how translations circulate, are received, and accrue value within national or global literary systems.

## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This study adopts a qualitative mixed-method approach grounded in sociological translation theory. Six representative excerpts—two from each of the three thematic clusters (symbolic power and obedience, dehumanisation of Yazidi women, and physical violence)—are selected from the Arabic source text of عذراء سنجار (Athraa Sinjar). Each passage is translated into English and analysed through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical constructs: habitus, capital, and illusio. Special attention is given to the translator's linguistic and ethical positioning in rendering ideologically saturated content.

By pairing thematically similar examples and examining how translation strategies shift across contexts. The study uncovers patterns that reflect the translator's agency, value orientation, and negotiation of power within the literary field. The result enables a comparative reading that identifies stylistic choices and contextualises them within broader sociopolitical and symbolic structures.

This methodology draws on close textual analysis—focusing on lexical choices, tone, syntax, and paratextual elements—while simultaneously engaging in sociological reflection informed by Bourdieu's reflexive epistemology. The approach is particularly appropriate to Bourdieu's model, which emphasises the dialectical relationship between structure and agency:

translators are not merely influenced by the literary field and participate in its reproduction or transformation (Inghilleri, 2005; Gouanvic, 2005; Sela-Sheffy, 2005).

Such a reflexive framework allows for an exploration of how individual translators, operating through their embodied habitus and accumulated capital, invest emotionally and ideologically (illusio) in texts that carry the burden of trauma, resistance, and cultural identity.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The past two decades have been marked by significant developments. Pierre Bourdieu's sociological framework has gained significant traction in translation studies, offering a powerful lens through which to examine the translator not as a neutral mediator but as a socially embedded agent whose work is shaped by and contributes to the literary and cultural field. Central to this Bourdieusian approach are the interrelated concepts of field, habitus, capital, and illusio, which together provide a reflexive model for analysing translation as a form of symbolic production.

A key starting point for this paradigm is Daniel Simeoni's (1998) influential article "The Pivotal Status of the Translator's Habitus", which introduced the concept of habitus into translation studies. Simeoni argued that translators are often positioned low in the symbolic hierarchy of the literary field and that their internalised dispositions (or habits) are shaped by historical marginalisation. This insight laid the groundwork for subsequent efforts to explore how translators negotiate their roles within specific cultural and institutional structures.

This research builds upon the foundational contributions made by Simeoni. Moira Inghilleri (2005, 2011) expanded Bourdieu's theoretical framework to the realms of interpreting and translation in conflict zones. She argues that translators develop a bilingual and bicultural habitus that shapes their linguistic decisions and reflects their emotional and ethical investment in the communicative act—what Bourdieu terms illusio. Inghilleri's analysis reveals how translation functions as a site of ideological negotiation, especially in politically sensitive settings such as wartime Iraq and refugee discourse.

While Bourdieusian approaches have been widely employed in European and Anglophone contexts (e.g., Simeoni, 1998; Sela-Sheffy, 2005; Gouanvic, 2005), their application to Middle Eastern translation contexts remains limited. Addressing this gap, Alsabah (2024) offers a socio-cultural account of Iraq's translation field across distinct political eras—pre- and post-2003—illustrating how translators navigate between state-sponsored narratives and independent intellectual currents. Her study foregrounds the role of symbolic capital, institutional power, and translator habitus in shaping translation practices, thereby broadening the scope of sociological translation studies beyond Western paradigms.

Rakefet Sela-Sheffy (2005, 2008) further contributed to the field by examining how professional translators in Israel construct and perform their identity in relation to dominant norms. Her studies indicate that translators actively seek symbolic capital—such as prestige, recognition, or alignment with intellectual or nationalist causes—through strategic positioning within the translation field. This aligns with Bourdieu's view that agents within any field struggle to accumulate capital and legitimacy.

Additional contributions have come from Jean-Marc Gouanvic (2005) who focused on the importation of science fiction into the French literary field, revealing how translators operate within a structured space of possibilities defined by institutional power, genre hierarchies, and market pressures. Similarly, Michaela Wolf (2007) emphasised the need to move beyond static notions of equivalence and instead view translation as a dynamic, contextually situated practice.

Despite these advancements, gaps remain in fully applying Bourdieusian theory to the analysis of literary translation in trauma contexts, particularly from under-represented cultural zones like Iraq. Most existing studies focus on European or Anglophone case studies, leaving Middle Eastern narratives and their translated reception underexplored. Furthermore, while the translator's habitus has been theorised extensively, fewer studies have mapped how illusio—the translator's belief in the stakes of literary and ideological labour—affects textual choices in emotionally intense material.

This study seeks to address these gaps by applying a Bourdieusian lens to the translation of سنجار عذراء (Athraa Sinjar), a novel rooted in the violent displacement and marginalisation of Yazidi women under ISIS. By focusing on translation as a site of symbolic struggle, it contributes to an expanding body of scholarship concerned with translator agency, ethics, and the politics of cultural representation in literary production.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws on Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory of cultural production, with particular emphasis on the interrelated concepts of field, habitus, capital, and illusio. These constructs provide a dynamic model for understanding how literary translators operate not merely as linguistic intermediaries but as socially embedded agents participating in the reproduction—or transformation—of symbolic structures.

### *Field*

According to Bourdieu, a field is a structured social space—a semi-autonomous arena of action—defined by its own rules, power hierarchies, and forms of legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1993). Particularly, the literary field embodies tensions between economic profit and symbolic prestige, as well as between mainstream acceptability and avant-garde resistance. Within this field, translators must navigate the competing demands of publishers, readers, institutions, and political ideologies (Gouanvic, 2005). In the context of Iraq, as shown by Alsabah (2024), translation practices have historically been shaped by the shifting dynamics of state control, censorship, and intellectual independence, positioning translators at the intersection of competing discourses.

### *Habitus*

Habitus refers to the internalised dispositions, values, and practices that guide an individual's perception and action in a field (Bourdieu, 1977). For translators, habitus may include their linguistic background, education, political ideology, and personal ethics—all of which shape

how they interpret and reframe texts. As Simeoni (1998) noted, the translator's habit is often conditioned by historical marginalisation and the perceived norms of invisibility or neutrality. Yet in contexts involving trauma, conflict, or cultural resistance, habitus may also motivate the translator to adopt an interventionist stance, as seen in the case of rendering emotionally charged or politically sensitive narratives.

***Capital***

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of capital encompasses the various resources that individuals accumulate and deploy to gain influence or recognition within a given field. In addition to economic capital—directly linked to material wealth—Bourdieu identifies three non-economic forms that are particularly relevant to the cultural and literary domains: cultural, social, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

While less visible in literary translation, economic capital influences the selection and publication of works. Translators with access to well-funded institutions, grants, or commercial publishers may be more likely to influence the field's output, especially when economic incentives align with ideological goals (Venuti, 1995).

Cultural capital includes formal education. The translator must possess linguistic proficiency and familiarity with literary or theoretical traditions. For translators, these attributes might involve expertise in postcolonial literature, trauma narratives, or knowledge of religious and historical contexts. For example, a translator working on Athraa Sinjar would need Arabic-English fluency and an understanding of Yazidi beliefs, regional dialects, and the cultural trauma of ISIS's occupation. Mastery of such background enhances the translator's authority and shapes their translation strategies (Gouanvic, 2005).

Social capital refers to the translator's network of relationships with publishers, editors, academics, and advocacy groups. These connections often determine whose translations are accepted, funded, or circulated. Translators embedded in influential literary or academic networks may secure publication in prestigious venues or access to endorsement by cultural institutions, further enhancing their legitimacy (Sela-Sheffy, 2005).

Symbolic capital is the most abstract but arguably the most powerful form. It refers to accumulated prestige, honour, and recognition within the field. A translator may gain symbolic capital by translating texts that represent marginalised voices, by receiving awards, or by aligning with political or humanitarian causes. For instance, translating a novel like Athraa Sinjar—which documents the persecution of Yazidis—may generate symbolic capital if the translator is perceived as giving voice to silenced suffering, thereby gaining recognition not for linguistic skill but for ethical commitment (Inghilleri, 2011).

Moreover, paratextual strategies—such as prefaces, footnotes, translator's notes, or glossaries—can serve as indicators of both cultural and symbolic capital. A translator who includes critical commentary or explanatory notes demonstrates deep cultural literacy (cultural capital) and may also frame themselves as a socially conscious or activist intellectual (symbolic capital). These framing devices shape how the translated text is received and interpreted,

especially when it deals with politically sensitive or emotionally charged material (Venuti, 1998; Tymoczko, 2007).

The accumulation and strategic deployment of these forms of capital ultimately determine the translator's position within the literary field. Bourdieu (1993) makes this argument that actors in any cultural field engage in struggles not over content but over the authority to define value. In translation, this means that the translator is not merely a linguistic technician but a symbolic producer, whose work is evaluated through layered systems of recognition, expertise, and institutional legitimacy.

### *Illusio*

'Illusio' is Bourdieu's term for the deep belief in the value and stakes of the field—what compels individuals to play the game and to invest emotionally, intellectually, and ethically in its outcomes (Bourdieu, 2000). In translation, illusio becomes particularly relevant when translators engage with texts that resonate with their political or moral convictions. Inghilleri (2011) observed how interpreters in war zones often act not simply out of professional obligation but from a belief in the significance of their role in shaping discourse and bearing witness to suffering. This sense of commitment is crucial in translating narratives such as Athraa Sinjar, where themes of gendered violence and cultural erasure invite strong affective alignment and ethical responsibility from the translator.

The translator utilises these concepts simultaneously. The Bourdieusian framework enables this study to analyse the translator's position as both a textual interpreter—navigating meaning and language—and a social actor, embedded in systems of power, ideology, and symbolic exchange. This dual perspective is essential for understanding how translations of trauma literature function not only as literary products but also as interventions within broader sociopolitical fields.

## TEXTUAL ANALYSES

This section presents a close analysis of six translated excerpts from عذراءسنجار (The Virgin of Sinjar). This work is examined through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory. Each passage has been selected to reflect one of three central thematic clusters: symbolic power and mass obedience, the dehumanisation of Yazidi women, and the enactment of physical violence. As both translator and researcher, I adopt a reflexive position, drawing on my own habitus and illusio to examine how language becomes a site of coercion, classification, and resistance. The analyses foreground how symbolic violence is reproduced through theological discourse, ritualised obedience, gendered degradation, and the spectacle of punishment. Each translated excerpt is accompanied by commentary that situates the linguistic choices within the dynamics of field, capital, and power, revealing how translation is not a neutral act but a socially embedded and ideologically charged practice.

**Symbolic Power and Mass Obedience**

*Excerpt (1): Chapter* اشبال الخليفة *– Page 207*

**" يا أشبال الإسلام .. قلنا لكم في الأيام الماضية إنّ مَن يرتد عن دين الله فهو كافر"**

English Translation: "*O cubs of Islam, we told you in recent days that whoever renounces the religion of Allah is a disbeliever*."

This excerpt exemplifies how symbolic power functions through a ritualised language that legitimises coercion. I base my analysis on Bourdieu's framework. I interpret the speaker's statement—"O cubs of Islam, we told you recently that whoever renounces the religion of Allah is a disbeliever"—as a moment of symbolic violence, in which power is exercised not through direct physical force but through the invocation of divine authority. The speaker does not merely instruct; rather, he embeds obedience within a sacred and absolute discourse that transforms violence into perceived religious truth. As the translator of this excerpt, I chose to render the phrase "أشبال الإسلام" as "cubs of Islam" instead of opting for more neutral terms like "children" or "youths." This choice was intentional, as the word "cubs" preserves the militarised metaphor that evokes combat readiness, loyalty, and the grooming of children into ideological warriors. In this context, language becomes a powerful instrument for shaping compliant and politicised habits. The phrase "قلنالكم" ("we told you") implies ritualistic repetition and indoctrination, elements central to what Bourdieu callsThis choice was intentional, as the word "cubs" preserves the militarised metaphor that evokes combat readiness, loyalty, and the grooming of children into ideological warriors. In this context, language becomes a powerful instrument for shaping compliant and politicised habits. oxic submission—where dominant individuals internalise the structures of domination as natural and even righteous. Through such repetition, the children in the scene are not simply taught religious dogma; they are habituated into a structured field where faith and obedience are inseparable. Being both a translator and a researcher in the Iraqi sociopolitical context, I recognise how the religious field intersects with power structures to produce what Bourdieu terms 'misrecognition': the acceptance of coercive doctrines as divine law. My decision to translate the phrase "منيرتدعنديناللهفهوكافر" with minimal euphemism was informed by a deliberate desire to preserve the coercive theological charge embedded in the source text. I did not wish to soften its impact for English-speaking readers; rather, I sought to render the rhetorical violence visible. My translatorial decisions reflect my own habitus—shaped by my training in translation studies and my cultural embeddedness in both Arabic and English-speaking fields. I acknowledge that I am not a neutral intermediary. My awareness of the text's symbolic and ideological weight informs every decision I make. For example, retaining the term "disbeliever" instead of substituting it with a less charged alternative such as "non-believer" was a conscious act rooted in my illusio—my emotional and ethical investment in capturing the disciplinary tone and theological absolutism of the original. In doing so, I enact a form of fidelity not to the text itself but to the sociological reality it represents and reproduces.

*Excerpt (2): Chapter* الحور العين *– Page 180*

**"وعليك أن تحسب أيها المسلم كم من عشرات ومئات وآلاف السنوات ستقضيها في هذه النعمة التي وهبها الله لك في الجنة ..."**

English Translation: "*And you, O Muslim, must reflect on how many tens, hundreds, and thousands of years you will spend in this blessing that Allah has granted you in Paradise."*

This excerpt offers a clear example of how symbolic power is sustained through eschatological reward and divine rhetoric. The statement "And you, O Muslim, must reflect on how many tens, hundreds, and thousands of years you will spend in this blessing that Allah has granted you in Paradise" appears within a sermonic passage designed to console but to discipline through promises of eternal reward. As the translator, I encountered a strategic dilemma: how to render the theological rhetoric in a way that preserves both its emotive cadence and its ideological weight. The original Arabic leans heavily on Qur'anic and doctrinal tones, which function as symbolic capital in the religious field, conferring authority on the speaker and legitimising his worldview. By retaining the second-person address ("you, O Muslim") and the hyperbolic accumulation of "tens, hundreds, and thousands of years," I aimed to mirror the rhythmic and moralistic quality of the Arabic, which draws on collective religious habitus to induce obedience through the promise of divine compensation. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this passage exemplifies the mechanism of misrecognition—whereby individuals accept submission to authority in exchange for symbolic goods such as salvation and honour. The speaker's invocation of "the blessing that Allah has granted" does not merely describe a theological belief; it mobilises it as a tool of governance, subtly regulating behaviour through the internalised logic of deferred gratification. My choice not to paraphrase or soften the eschatological imagery reflects my illusio—my belief in the stakes of this translation and in the importance of revealing how language normalises spiritual obedience. I did not domesticate the theological frame, as doing so would risk flattening the ideological register and concealing the symbolic violence embedded in the promise of paradise. Instead, I allowed the foreignness of the rhetoric to remain visible, highlighting the speaker's use of divine discourse to elicit discipline, loyalty, and moral conformity. In this sense, the translation becomes a linguistic act and a sociological one: a reflection of how religious capital circulates within the field of jihadist discourse and how the translator's position is implicated in mediating its reception. My academic and cultural habitus enables me to sense the connotative pressures in such utterances, and it is this reflexive awareness that guides my translatorial decisions. Ultimately, I regard this moment as one in which symbolic power is not imposed by force but cultivated through narrative—the promise of heaven becomes a structure of control cloaked in divine grace.

**Dehumanisation of Yazidi Women**

*Excerpt (3): Chapter* اسراء ومعراج *- Page 220*

**"حامل ؟ إنها صغيرة وجميلة مثل الدمية، كيف تحمل الدمية ؟ انتصروا عليّ بكِ . أذلّوني الى النهاية ... أعادوكِ حاملاً ...هههه!..."**

English Translation: *"Pregnant? She's small and beautiful, like a doll—how can a doll be pregnant? They defeated me with you. They humiliated me completely... and now they've returned you to me, pregnant... haha!"*

This excerpt stands as a disturbing manifestation of symbolic domination. where gendered violence is expressed not through narrative content but through tone, metaphor, and bitter irony. The statement—"Pregnant? She's small and beautiful, like a doll—how can a doll be pregnant? They defeated me with you. They humiliated me completely... and now they've returned you to me, pregnant... haha!" This phrase conveys both personal devastation and the grotesque spectacle of suffering. As the translator, I was immediately confronted with the challenge of rendering the sarcasm and trauma without neutralising the violence embedded in the speaker's voice. The comparison of the girl to a "doll" is particularly charged; in Arabic, "دمية" evokes not just physical delicacy, but an infantilised, voiceless object of beauty. Retaining the term "doll" in English preserves this semantic field and foregrounds the speaker's horror at the forced transformation of a child into a mother through rape—a transformation he cannot comprehend except as an absurd violation of nature and innocence.

From a Bourdieusian perspective this passage is saturated with symbolic violence—violence that operates not through direct physical action, but through the imposition of classifications that reduce human beings to subhuman or aestheticised objects. The girl's pregnancy is framed as a defeat, not just for her but for the speaker, whose speech reflects internalised patriarchal values and honour-based shame. This framing reveals how social hierarchies and gender roles are reproduced through discourse, as the speaker locates his humiliation in the defilement of "his" woman. Translating the phrase "أذلّونيإلىالنهاية" as "they humiliated me completely" was a decision rooted in both linguistic fidelity and sociological awareness. I chose to emphasise the totality of the humiliation to reflect how symbolic power works through the destruction of not only bodies but also identities, reputations, and social roles.

The final phrase—"pregnant… haha!"—is perhaps the most ethically and emotionally complex element to translate. The laugh is not one of joy but of despair, disbelief, and perhaps even madness. It is a linguistic rupture that challenges the limits of representation. I retained it in English in its raw form, resisting the urge to interpret or explain it further within the translation. To do otherwise would have been to impose a rational frame on what is essentially a collapse of meaning. My decision reflects an investment—an illusion—in exposing the affective violence at work in the original Arabic. Through my own habitus, shaped by familiarity with both the gendered realities of post-conflict Iraq and the sociological stakes of translation, I interpret this passage as an instance where language becomes a site of both witness and wounding. By preserving the grotesque humour and emotional volatility, I aim not merely to translate content but to reveal how language itself participates in the reproduction of trauma and in the dehumanisation

of the vulnerable. In this moment, the translator becomes not a mediator of clarity but a conduit of discomfort—deliberately so, because smoothing over this discomfort would itself constitute symbolic violence.

*Excerpt (4): Chapter* **الكافرات** *– Page 301*

**"تسارعت التعليقات بطريقة غير متوقعة واحتدّت واستنكرت مثل هذا الفعل الذي يكشف عن بشاعة وانحطاط في الأخلاق والدين"**

English Translation: "*The comments escalated unexpectedly, growing intense and condemning such an act, which reveals a horrifying level of moral and religious degradation."*

This excerpt captures a critical narrative shift where the text momentarily turns its gaze onto itself and critiques the spectacle of violence it portrays. The statement—"The comments escalated unexpectedly, growing intense and condemning such an act, which reveals a horrifying level of moral and religious degradation"—offers a rare moment of public moral judgement within a broader context saturated with objectification and brutality. As the translator, I was acutely aware of the tension embedded in this sentence: it articulates collective outrage, yet it does so within a narrative structure that itself risks reproducing the voyeuristic consumption of violated bodies, particularly those of women. My challenge was to navigate between documenting horror and resisting its normalisation. In rendering the Arabic term "بشاعة" as "horrifying," I sought to preserve the emotional register of disgust while avoiding sensationalism. The pairing of "moral and religious degradation" mirrors the Arabic "انحطاطفيالأخلاقوالدين", which I retained with minimal alteration to reflect the cultural framing of the critique—not merely ethical, but deeply spiritual and communal.

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power is especially relevant here. The outrage described in the excerpt does not emerge from direct confrontation with perpetrators but rather from a discursive field of comments and reactions. These responses serve as a kind of secondary witnessing, where symbolic capital is reasserted through expressions of condemnation. The structure of the sentence foregrounds the speed and emotional charge of the public's response—"متوقعة غير بطريقة التعليقات تسارعت"—a phrasing I translated as "escalated unexpectedly" to emphasise the spontaneous, almost visceral, nature of the moral reflex. As a translator engaged with this material both linguistically and sociologically, I had to balance between accuracy and sensitivity, particularly given the risk that repetition of violent acts in narrative form may dull the reader's ethical response.

This passage is less about the act itself than about how it is framed and judged in discourse. In Bourdieu's terms, we are witnessing a contestation within the symbolic field—a clash between the normalisation of violence and the moral reflex that seeks to reinforce social boundaries. My translatorial illusio—my investment in the ethical implications of this text—guided me to resist both euphemism and sensationalism. Instead, I leaned into the gravity of the moral register, preserving the condemnatory tone as an act of solidarity with the voices of resistance embedded in the narrative. Through this approach, translation becomes an act of

transfer and a space of ethical engagement, where language can either reproduce symbolic violence or expose it for what it is.

**Physical Violence**

*Excerpt (5): Chapter* **عاريات في صباح الولاية***– Page 47*

**"شهقت امرأة من المجموع بلغة كردية.. كافي الله يخليكم.. وصاحت أخرى يا همج يا كلاب يا أنذال.. ..."**

English Translation: *"One of the women in the group gasped and cried out in Kurdish, 'enough, for God's sake… please!' Another shouted, 'You savages! You dogs! You cowards!'*

This excerpt emerges from one of the most viscerally charged scenes in the novel, where language functions not as description but as a cry—an eruption of resistance in the face of brutal domination. The line, "One of the women in the group gasped and cried out in Kurdish, 'Enough, for God's sake… please!' Another shouted, 'You savages! You dogs! 'You cowards!' reflects the immediacy of pain and the stripping away of symbolic order in the chaos of physical abuse. As the translator, I approached this moment with a heightened sense of ethical responsibility. The original Arabic captures both the fragmentation and desperation of speech under duress. Preserving the emotional rhythm and lexical force was critical—not to aestheticise the violence, but to resist silencing the women's outrage. I chose to retain the direct insults ("savages", "dogs", "cowards") in their rawest form, despite their confrontational tone, because these words are not gratuitous—they are the last available tools of defiance for women being physically and symbolically violated.

Bourdieu's concept of illusio, the investment that agents make in the stakes of a given field, is particularly useful here. My own illusio—my emotional, ethical, and scholarly investment—compelled me to render the Kurdish woman's plea and the Arabic insults without dilution. Translating "كافياللهيخليكم" as "Enough, for God's sake… please!" preserves the invocation of divine mercy that is so culturally and spiritually resonant in Iraqi discourse. The message is not merely a cry to stop; it is an appeal to humanity, to shared moral codes, even amid lawless cruelty. My decision to reflect the bilingual texture of the scene—where Kurdish and Arabic intermingle—was intentional, as it highlights the layered ethnic and linguistic identities of the victims, further intensifying their vulnerability and the complexity of the field in which this violence unfolds.

From a sociological standpoint, this passage does not simply document physical violence; it enacts it linguistically. The insults are acts of verbal counter-violence, expressions of symbolic resistance within a context where the victims lack access to other forms of power. Translating these moments demanded linguistic fidelity and emotional clarity. I did not want to reproduce violence as a spectacle, yet I also recognised that muting these voices would be a form of symbolic erasure. The translator in this case is not a silent conduit but a witness, positioned within the field and charged with negotiating how trauma is represented and received. My habit, shaped by my familiarity with both the sociolinguistic dimensions of the Iraqi conflict and the ethics of literary translation, allowed me to recognise this moment not simply as dialogue but as an act of survival articulated through language. In translating this passage, I embraced the discomfort it carries, believing that discomfort—when consciously preserved—can be a form of justice.

*Excerpt (6): Chapter 58* **صورة عابرة** *– Page 392*

Arabic Excerpt:

**"يحدث الآن في الموصل . وما تزال جثة الشاب معلقة في ساحة الحد الإسلامي ورأسه المقطوع بين قدميه ."**

English Translation: *"Happening now in Mosul... the body of a young man still hangs in the Execution Square, his severed head between his feet."*

Death: "Happening now in Mosul... the body of a young man still hangs in the Execution Square, his severed head between his feet." The horror here lies not in the brutality of the act itself but in its ritualistic staging—performed in what is culturally known as Sahat al-Hadd, or Execution Square. In Islamic legal tradition, ḥadd punishments are fixed penalties for major offences, such as theft, adultery, or apostasy. Referring to this site as an Execution Square frames the violence not as a deviation but as a religiously structured and socially visible act of enforcement. Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power helps illuminate how such scenes reproduce authority—not simply through killing, but through carefully orchestrated public spectacles designed to instill submission and reinforce doxa.

As the translator, I opted for the term "Execution Square" to retain the institutional and ritualised connotations of the original Arabic without resorting to literalism or euphemism. My illusio—my investment in the ethical and interpretive stakes of translation—guided me to preserve the brutality of the imagery in its raw, unmediated form. The phrase "his severed head between his feet" appears almost clinically in the Arabic, and I mirrored that starkness in English to avoid turning horror into drama. My intention was not to aestheticise violence but to expose the language's grammar of fear and control. Through this translation, I sought to reflect how the field of power legitimises violence symbolically, cloaking it in the logic of justice and order. As a translator with cultural proximity and academic grounding, I recognise that every word in this passage carries political weight, and I assume responsibility for transmitting that weight, not softening it.

## CONCLUSION

This study has explored the complex interplay between translator agency and symbolic power through a Bourdieusian analysis of six excerpts from Athraa Sinjar, a novel that chronicles the trauma and resistance of Yazidi women under ISIS rule. By translating and analysing thematically charged passages centred on obedience, dehumanisation, and physical violence, the researchers have demonstrated that the translator is not merely a conduit of language but an agent embedded within social, political, and ideological fields.

Through the lens of Bourdieu's concepts—habitus, capital, and illusio—the translator emerges as a socially situated actor whose linguistic decisions reflect accumulated dispositions, ethical orientations, and emotional investments. The analyses show that translating ideologically saturated content entails navigating symbolic violence, preserving the force of theological and gendered discourse, and bearing witness to suffering without succumbing to either censorship or

spectacle. The translator's habitus—informed by cultural fluency, political awareness, and personal proximity to the subject matter—shapes not only how meaning is transferred but also how power is contested and reinscribed in the target text. Similarly, the strategic mobilisation of cultural and symbolic capital—through terminology, tone, or paratextual framing—affords the translator a role in shaping the reception and position of the translated narrative within the global literary field.

Most critically, the translator's illusio—the belief in the stakes of the text—guides decisions that are not just stylistic but moral. Choosing to preserve discomfort, to confront the reader with linguistic traces of domination and pain, is itself a form of resistance. In this way, translation becomes a space of ethical and political engagement, not merely representation.

By applying Bourdieu's sociological framework to a post-conflict Arabic literary text, this study contributes to the expanding field of translation sociology, particularly in its application to under-represented cultural contexts. It reinforces the value of reflexive translation practice and calls for greater scholarly attention to the translator's role in mediating trauma, power, and identity. Future research may build on this approach to examine translator agencies in other conflict-affected regions, exploring how local habits and global literary norms interact to shape the visibility and value of marginalised voices.

## LIMITATIONS AND REFLEXIVE RISK

This study highlights the importance of a Bourdieusian method in translating trauma. It also has limitations. Translating violence and gendered trauma risks recreating narrative hierarchies, aestheticising suffering, or imposing interpretive frameworks influenced by the translator's habitus. Despite reflexive awareness, choosing and presenting excerpts naturally prioritise certain voices while silencing others. Future research could build on this by involving multiple translators or perspectives, which would help reduce the risks of over-identification or unintentional symbolic reproduction.

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