

Untranslatability of Algeria in 'the Black Decade'

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Chapter Two

Untranslatability of Algeria in 'the Black Decade

Anissa Daoudi

"(ة) مشنقتنا التي علقها اله وهمي صنعه البشر حسب نزواتهم"

*"(ة) is our gallows, hung by an imaginary God,
created by men according to their fancy"*

The above quotation was handwritten for me by the Algerian writer Fadhila Al Farouq inside my copy of her novel *تاء الخجل Taa al Khajal*¹⁰¹ (2005). The Arabic letter 'taa marbuta' or 'closed taa' is the principal indicator of the feminine gender. In its uncial form, it usually appears as a circle under two dots (ة). The handwritten version by Al Farouq has two tilted lines emerging from both sides (ة¹⁰²), making it look like a hangman's noose. For her (ة), represents a noose around women's necks. She uses 'our' to refer to all Arab women without exception. She denotes this noose as an imaginary 'man-made' tool created according to men's fancy to represent God or religion in general. Al Farouq uses the 'closed taa /ة/' as a metaphor to refer to the closed society she lives in. The circle constituting blockage of her society, in which people are going around in circles, not finding a way out. There is the suggestion of an impasse, a very pessimistic view as it eliminates the possibility of hope for change.

¹⁰¹ . In an interview on (14/10/2014), the author mentions that most of the events are not fiction, they are based on testimonies she collected when working as a journalist.

¹⁰² This sign is the nearest I found to represent the 'closed taa' and at the same time gives the impression of a noose.

Al Farouq's novel has been translated into French as *La Honte au Feminin* (2009)¹⁰³. The title in French evokes questions about translatability in general and about transferring concepts, rather than words or phrases, from the source to the target text. The translated version into French opts for 'F' for the French word 'feminin'. Only does this not have the same cognitive image of the 'closed taa /ّ/' as a circle, but also it distorts the whole concept. Al Farouq devotes a complete chapter to the issue of the feminine gender in the Arabic language, its symbolic significance and how it impacts gender politics. She entitles the chapter "تاء مربوطة لا غير", "*ta'marbuta la ghaira, 'a closed taa /ّ/' and nothing else*", which has been translated into French as, "*F*" *fermé et rien d'autre*. The translated version into 'F' for 'feminin' is a direct alphabetical interpretation of the original language. However, what the author wants to convey is the indirect and symbolic signification of the circle in the 'closed taa /ّ/', referring to 'no exit' situation. Al Farouq does not imply the notion of the circle as symbolic of something that is whole, complete, ideal and eternal but as something that has no ending and no beginning. Al Farouq's reader should understand that the intended meaning is that of the closed Algerian society. The direct alphabetical interpretation, however, relates to the discourse about the Arabic language and feminism, highlighting the masculinity of Arabic through its grammar. This is not a new issue: it has been addressed by scholars such as, Yousra Muqaddam¹⁰⁴, Zuleikha Abu Risha¹⁰⁵ and Abdellah Al Ghadhmi¹⁰⁶. They all start from within the Arabic grammatical system and its feminine indicators to deconstruct the wider patriarchal

¹⁰³ Taa al Khajal (2005) published by Riad El-Rayyes Books in Arabic was translated into French *La Honte au Feminin* (2009), published by Editions El-Ikhtilef and Arab Scientific Publishers, Inc.

¹⁰⁴ Yusra Muqaddam (2010) *Al Harim al lughawi*. All Prints.com

¹⁰⁵ Zuleikha Abu Risha (2009) *Untha al lugha*. Ninawa Print.

¹⁰⁶ Abdellah Mohamed Al Ghathami (2005) *Ta'nith al qasida wa al qari' al mukhtalif*. Arab Cultural Centre.

masculine system in their societies. Al Farouq's example and many others make up the core of this article, which discusses the 'untranslatability' of Algeria, to borrow Apter's title (Apter, 2006: 94). Specifically, this article concentrates on the 'untranslatability' of Algeria during the 1990s, known as the 'Black Decade' during which the whole country descended into turmoil. The 'untranslatability' of Algeria exists not only at the linguistic level, as lack of equivalence or mistranslation, but also exists in plural 'untranslatabilities', as I shall explain in the course of the article.

This article provides an in-depth study of the concept of 'untranslatability', developed by Emily Apter (2013), and challenges its practicality in the case of Algeria, where further refinements to the concept are needed. In her chapter on Algeria, Apter presents the concept of untranslatability as a homogenous notion and explains the reasons that are specific to the Algerian case. This article seeks to challenge the existing framework and adds typologies that help to illustrate the idea further. Attempts (for example, Gleeson, 2015) to propose typologies that may be used as guidelines remain within the limits of language and translation. However, this article proposes a wider look at how language systems or language policies may contribute to types of untranslatabilities, using practical examples from various mediums such as personal interviews conducted by the researcher, novels and testimonies in the two working languages in Algeria, French and Arabic.

While the 'Untranslatability' of Algeria is the overarching theme, the article deals with a phase when Algeria went under the radar for a decade. It is a historical period about which very little is known. More importantly, very little is mentioned about the role of women in the conflict, either as survivors or as militants. This article has three objectives. The first is to bring to light narratives of Algerian women from the 'Black Decade' through different mediums, personal interviews, and cultural

production (novels, memoirs and testimonies) in the two working languages of Algeria, Arabic and French. The second is to challenge the concept of untranslatability as a homogeneous notion, but to show, through using Algeria as a case study, that there are multiple, in some cases interrelated, ‘untranslatabilities’ and at the same time promote ‘translation’ as a way of unsettling and disquieting narratives. The third is to engage with the global discourse of presenting women not as victims or survivors, but as “capable, active and significant participants in conflict zones” (Daphna – Tekoak and Harel – Shalev, 2016: 2). The article will then focus on a theme that is hardly mentioned, let alone studied, and which is related to narratives of sexual violence, namely rape. The first assumption one might make when dealing with ‘rape’, particularly in traditional conservative countries like Algeria, is that one is dealing with a case of ‘cultural untranslatability’. However, this article challenges some stereotypes and shows that ‘rape’ as a sensitive issue, is rather a universal phenomenon and is treated as being sensitive because of its nature.

Algeria is a country, which had lived through violence of all sorts under the French colonial system, where women were sexually abused by the coloniser. However, in the 1990s, the perpetrator was not the French, but the Algerian ‘brother’. This so-called ‘brother’ raped, tortured and killed according to a different ideology, an ideology which translates ‘rape’ as is known in this modern time into ‘*sabi*’¹⁰⁷, a term used in the Crusade, permitting the act of sexual violence against women of different faith, captured in war. The lack of accountability for the time factor is crucial for this article as it explains further what Apter refers to as ‘sacral or theological untranslatability’. For her, “*the difficulty remains concerning how to take sacral untranslatability as its word without secularist condescension. I make no*

¹⁰⁷ For more information about the concept of *sabi*, see Amal Grami’s article in this issue.

pretense of resolving the issue, only to ensuring that it is to be recognized as the major heuristic challenge for the interpretive humanities” (Apter, 2013: 14). This is a well-known phenomenon, which some Arab thinkers spent their lives throughout history researching and providing answers to. For example, projects by Al Jabiri, Al Aroui, Arkoun and many others in the Nahdha period such as Al Tahtawi¹⁰⁸.

The concept of untranslatability is frequently used in the literature of translation theory in a homogeneous way. Classifying a range of untranslatabilities, not necessarily in any order, advances the concept further and opens further discussion. It also responds to a lack of precision related to the concept. The ideas and examples discussed within each section act as suggestions as to how one can understand and classify untranslatabilities. The discussion draws on the areas of linguistics, semantics, theories of language and power, and literature to explore texts where untranslatability is present. The five categories presented do not all answer the question as to why Algeria is untranslatable, but give account of the most relevant reasons for untranslatability. Linguicide, as one of the reasons for untranslatability is challenged by bringing out one crucial element, which is the elimination of the Algerian dialect and how it played a crucial role in the silencing of the population as well as the eruption of the conflict between Arabophone, Francophone and Berberophone. Intellocide, which is the targeting and killing of Algerian intellectuals in the 1990s, is supported with personal interviews, testimonies, novels and films to give concrete examples that challenge official narratives. Linguicide and intellocide in Algeria are presented as interrelated motives for untranslatability, which are also direct reasons for why external untranslatabilities happen in the case of this country.

¹⁰⁸ For more information, see Tariq Sabry (2013): *Cultural Encounters in the Arab World: On Media, the Modern and the Everyday*. I. B. Tauris.

The point of emphasising the various classifications of the concept of untranslatability is to facilitate a clearer understanding both in theory and in practice.

I. Theoretical context

Much of the recent discourse in translation studies is about the issue of ‘untranslatability’ (Apter, 2013). Discussions range from ‘everything is translatable and transferred from one language into another (Bellos and Jean-Jacques Lecercle) who claim that in the end nothing is untranslatable’, to all translation is necessary but doomed to failure because of the ‘unachievable nature of the task’, (Barbara Cassin) to everything is ‘untranslatable’, (Apter’s book *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, 2013). Apter’s idea is based on rejecting the assumption that everything can “*be translated, exchanged or substituted into one accessible global idiom*” (Apter, 2013). She asks her readers to consider the concept of untranslatability, referring to as she puts it “*those thorny, frustrating moments of cultural dissonance and misunderstanding - as the key to translation and cross-cultural engagement*” (ibid). Apter considers words as part of a whole system in which meanings of words depend on their relationship to each other just as Ferdinand de Saussure does. She then takes this idea further to locate significant differences in thought that are conditioned by language and culture. For her and for Cassin, the problems faced by translators are a rich site for deeper inquiries. ‘Untranslatability’ here is perceived as a dynamic concept and a necessary one. It is considered as a platform from which hegemonic discourses are challenged. Despite Apter’s attempts to provide examples of untranslatability, further work is still needed to categorise

types of ‘untranslatabilities’, to avoid the assumption of the homogeneity of ‘untranslatability’ and to provide more precision.

The theoretical framework proposed by this article is a new way of looking at the concept of ‘untranslatability’ from that used in the field of Translation Studies. It takes the Algerian case as an example through which the concept of untranslatability could be understood and further refined. It presents Apter (2013) with new interpretation and provides multiple ‘untranslatabilities’ on different textual and non-textual levels. In her chapter, “*Untranslatable*” *Algeria: The Politics of Linguicide*”, Apter (2006) goes to analyse why Algeria is untranslatable without naming typologies or putting them into categories. The article seeks to respond to this lack of precision and presents new dynamics and new types of ‘untranslatabilities’ that are specific to the Algerian case, but that may also apply to other cases of ‘untranslatabilities’. Unusually, the article not only deals with the supposed typologies that help understand the reasons for the untranslatabilities, but also brings into discussion the different mediums through which the untranslatabilities occur, such as novels, testimonies, and personal interviews in Arabic, in Berber and in French. This combination of languages is a hands-on case of multilingualism in Algeria that provides both theoretical ideas and also practical situations that can be helpful to translators.

The first type of ‘untranslatability’ revolves most of the time around the linguistic aspects that make a text ‘untranslatable’ from one language into another. The focus centres upon structural (im)possibilities of language, where words and their meanings are analysed as secondary elements. For example, “*the untranslatability of sound patterns created by phonemes, words and phrases of a text in its original language*” (Gleeson, 2015: 3). The second type is cultural ‘untranslatability’, which

is the most frequently encountered by translators. Here, the challenge is not only to find an equivalent in terms of meaning, terminology and/or idiomatic expression that equates to the target language, but sometimes goes further to the concepts that might not exist in the target language/culture or which might exist but with different connotations. Apter locates the source of difficulty in “*the deferential weight assigned by cultures to common cognates*” (Apter, 2013: 35). Cultural untranslatability for this article is supposed to start from the theme of rape/sexual violence, which is inevitably a taboo in traditional Arabo-Muslim culture. However, the sensitivity of the theme is ‘universal’. In other words, the cultural weight assigned to the word ‘rape’ in most Muslim cultures as well as the rest of the world can be hard to translate. Instead, the difficulty arises from the historical connotation in Islamic societies to the word/concept of ‘rape’ as we know it now, which was allowed and encouraged in wartime as in the case of */sabi/* (see footnote 6 above). Rape is also often associated with female virginity and is loaded with connotations, which make its translation a challenging task. The third type is ‘theological untranslatability’ for which translating into or/and from Arabic is a good example. Apter refers to the book by the prominent Moroccan thinker Abdelfateh Kilito, *Thou Shall not Speak my Language*¹⁰⁹, which shows that Arabic is considered a sacred language and therefore, according to Kilito¹¹⁰, any attempt at translation could lead to misinterpretation and mistranslation. Kilito’s arguments about the language and its sacredness have been the core of debate for decades in most disciplines. While Kilito includes this type under the cultural untranslatability¹¹¹, I argue that the root is the

¹⁰⁹ Kilito, A. (2008) *Thou Shall not Speak my language*. Translated from Arabic by Wail S. Hassan.

¹¹⁰ When Kilito mentions Arabic, he refers to the Standard form (SA).

¹¹¹ For a closer understanding, Hassan argues that “*Kilito highlights the problem of cultural translation as an interpretive process and as an essential element of comparative literary studies. In close readings of al-Jahiz, Ibn Rushd, al-Saffar, and al-Shidyahq, among others, he traces the shifts in attitude toward language and translation from the centuries of Arab cultural ascendancy to the*

difficulty lies in the linguistic gap between Classical and Modern Arabic. In this article, I shall demonstrate that it is because of the sacredness of the language and the lack of language development that ‘untranslatabilities’ occur and continue to persist, despite modernity.

Voices against the sacredness of the language have been marginalised, for example, Al-Jābirī and Laroui, who think that the way forward for Arabic to flourish and develop as is by cutting off with the ‘glorious past’ and by moving away from the close relationship of Arabic with the Qur’an. Moustapha Safouan (2007) in his book *Why Arab are the Arabs not Free? The Politics of writing* (2007: 49), demonstrates the power relationship between Classical Arabic and writing throughout the Islamic history. He says: “*We are one of the civilisations that invented writing more than five thousand years ago. The state monopolised it and made it an esoteric art reserved for its scribes*”. He adds that: “*written in a ‘higher’ if not sacred language, works about ideas were similarly constituted as a separate domain to which ordinary people had no access to. The result was that the state could safely eliminate any writers who dared to contradict the prevailing orthodoxies, and that writers, just like the old scribes, only survived within the established order*” (ibid). This same archaic ruse of the state continues to this day (ibid). This implies that the vernacular is seen as ‘low’ and continues to be used for spoken practices only. Safouan (2007: 94) thinks that “one of the main disaster of the Middle East to be that it never knew the principle of linguistic humanism as reintroduced in Europe by Dante during the Middle Ages and later intensified thanks to the Reformation and to the creation of European nations”. Along this line, the Algeria case will be presented, with examples (interviews, novels,

contemporary period, interrogating along the way how the dynamics of power mediate literary encounters across cultural, linguistic, and political lines”.

testimonies and memoirs) of how Algerian dialect as well as Berber were put a side to silence a whole generation in postcolonial Algeria.

‘External untranslatability’ is related to the contextualisation that affects a text regardless of its linguistic content. External factors may be in a soft form, related to what Toury describes for example as ‘the social role’ of the translator as “fulfilling a function specified by the community”. Gleeson (2015) adds that ‘External untranslatability’ can be in a hard form, in other words, in a more complex form, such as what Bassnett (2002) calls ‘uni-directional’ flows of translation. Here, Bassnett is raising the issue of power relations between the colonised and the coloniser. Translation was used as an instrument to colonise and to deprive the colonised of a voice. Translation reinforces that power hierarchy (ibid, 387). In the same vein, Venuti argues that colonial power plays an important role in maintaining hegemony in translation (Venuti, 1998: 1). Carli Coetzee gives the example of South Africa where much translation aims to extend and affirm the monolingual privilege by translating African Languages into English (Coetzee, 2013). She suggests a ‘reverse flow’. In other words, Coetzee supports the refusal to translate from African languages into English in order to destabilise the hegemony of the English language. In Algeria and other North African countries, like Tunisia and Morocco, the hegemony lies in the French language dominance over native languages. I argue that translation into English, Berber or/and local Arabic dialect would widen readership and help dismantle the hegemonic languages in Algeria (Standard Arabic and French). In this article, these classifications are not in any particular order, for example, ‘linguistic untranslatability’ is argued in terms of the linguistic situation in Algeria, which goes beyond the limits of the language to analyse a broader issue that is specific to Algeria, namely, ‘linguicide’. Linked to this is a topic known as ‘intellocide’, which, as I shall

clarify below, could fit under both heads. ‘Theological untranslatability’ and ‘external untranslatability’ can also be interrelated. What is of importance to this article is what I call ‘untranslatability of the Unspeakable’, which is about the formulation and translation of words that can describe and transfer feelings related to sensitive and painful experiences like rape. This inability to translate trauma into words is linked to the inability to comprehend and make sense of what goes on, as was in the case of Algeria in the 1990s. In the following section, Algeria is taken as a case study to demonstrate the different types of untranslatabilities.

II. ‘Untranslatable Algeria’

a) Algerian linguicide

The title of this section is borrowed from Apter’s chapter “‘Untranslatable’ Algeria: The politics of Linguicide” in her book: *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (2006). I will shed light on what makes Algeria ‘untranslatable’, starting with the *linguicide* (ibid) and its roots, challenging Apter’s ideas by unravelling the complex layers of the language conflict Algeria and by taking her dichotomy of Arabophones versus Francophones further to include the regional dialect and Tamazight. This will illustrate illustrating not only the effects of the ‘language question’ on the whole of post-independence Algerian society, but also other critical factors, such as the issuing of particular laws which preceded and had direct effects on the 1990s and the years that followed, contributing to the instability of the present situation in Algeria.

In this section I will highlight the ‘untranslatability’ of a whole country through the ‘language question’ as it is always referred to in relation to Algeria (Treacy, 2013: 402). The term comes from French and takes us directly to the point to be made about language as supposedly a unifying characteristic of any nation. In Algeria, however, after independence in 1962, the country slipped into a battlefield of different nationalist and Islamist ideologies, some advocating the return to a strict Arab-Muslim identity, and others claiming resistance this, like the Berbers and the Francophones who needed time to adjust to the new movement of Arabisation¹¹². The ‘language question’¹¹³ was central to the various discourses in the decades that followed independence. The country has seen multiple - and at times contradictory - attempts to police the language of the Algerian people. While the discourses about the Arabisation project had the ingredients for success, in reality the project became a central element of disunity, as it started by marginalizing the Berbers¹¹⁴, who are indigenous citizens of Algeria, as well as the vast majority of Algerians who had a Francophone education. The French educational system, including the use of French as a medium of education, remained the only educational system for Algeria for a while before being framed and narrated by revolutionary political rhetoric as the language of the enemy that should be eradicated. The Arabisation project was responsible for much of the ‘untranslatability’ of the newly independent Algeria and placed a generation in exile in their own country as French was seen as betraying the

¹¹² Arabisation (Arabic: تعريب *ta 'rīb*) is part of the wider movement of decolonisation in Algeria. It aims to impose standard Arabic at the expense of French and other local languages such as Tamazight. This language policy reflected a wider vision of Arab/Muslim leaders, who wanted to break from the colonial past and start afresh while forging alliances with Arab/Muslim states.

¹¹³ For more information about the language question, see: *Language Conflict in Algeria* by Mohamed Benrabah (2013). Multilingual Matters.

¹¹⁴ Berber languages, the languages of the indigenous people in North Africa, are called Tamazight; there are variations within the Berber language, such as Tashelhit and Taqbaylit.

nationalist sentiment, known as Pan Arab Nationalism¹¹⁵ which was growing not only in Algeria but also in the whole Arab region. Ahlem Mosteghanmi's novel *Memory in the Flesh* (1985) starts with the following words:

“To the memory of Malek Haddad, son of Constantine, who swore after the independence of Algeria not to write in a language that is not his. The blank pages assassinated him. He died by the might of his silence to become a martyr of the Arabic language and the first writer to die silent, grieving, and passionate on its behalf”.

Mosteghanmi, a prominent Algerian writer, chose to start her novel recalling the world of Malek Haddad, the famous Francophone writer, and many others who were victims of the linguicide that happened in post-independence Algeria. Malek Hadad refused to write in the colonial language and died of silence. Similarly Malek Haddad who was assassinated by the blank page, Assia Djebar's *Le Blanc de l'Algerie* (1995) (The Algerian White) argues for the same blankness of the page. The *white* in her title refers to the unwritten pages of Algerian history. It refers to the failed revolution, yet to be written in a new language that is yet to be agreed upon. The language issue has been central to Djebar who dreamt of a polylingual society that fits the very multicultural situation of Algeria. Djebar, as Hiddleston (2005: 3) states “*uses her writing to uncover the oppressed multilingualism and multi-cultural creativity of Algerian art and literature, and to create a narrative of mourning that appropriately*

¹¹⁵ Pan Arab Nationalism (Arabic: القومية العربية *al-Qawmiyya al-`arabiyya*) is a nationalist ideology celebrating the glories of Arab civilization, the language and literature of the Arabs, calling for rejuvenation and political union in the Arab world.

encapsulates the intractable horrors that official and ideological discourses have tried to deny". Djebbar used French, the presumably secular language, to fight back and to disconnect herself from the monolingual ideology claimed by the Islamists. For her, "a nation is an entire bundle of languages and this is especially true of Algeria" (Šukys, 2004: 117).

Anne-Emmanuelle Berger (2002: 72) finds Gilbert Grandguillaume's parallel between what happened to Algerian women and what happened to the Algerian language in independent Algeria a truthful parallel. Despite Algerian women's remarkable contribution to the War of Liberation and the "bold steps they took, unveiled, into the public sphere (a process described by Frantz Fanon in his 1959 article 'l'Algérie se dévoile', Grandguillaume reminds us of the multiple ways in which independent Algeria strove to send the women back 'home' and confine them to the domestic sphere" (Berger, 2007: 72). The parallel is drawn between dialectal Arabic and the 'unveiled' Algerian women, "who, like the language they speak inside and outside the home with their fellow Algerians, are a symbol or metonymy for 'true Algerianness'" (ibid). Yet when it comes to the formal usage of Arabic, it is the dialectal which gets sent home, in a sense 'veiled', confined to the private space only. While Standard Arabic (SA), known as *fusha* is the formal language for writing, regional dialects known as *'ammiya* are used informally in the spoken form only¹¹⁶. This imposition of Standard Arabic in Algeria, known as the Arabisation movement, aims not only to eradicate French but also native languages like Berber. This

¹¹⁶ This phenomenon is what is referred to as diglossia, which is a linguistic situation where two varieties of the same language exist to fulfil different social functions and are used in the same speech community. For more information about Arabic sociolinguistics, Reem Bassiouney gives a sketch of the main research trends about Diglossia, language contact and language change in her book: *Arabic Sociolinguistics* (2009), Edinburgh University Press.

ideology goes back to the Association of Algerian *ulama*¹¹⁷ movement, which started in the 1930s against colonialism and which claimed ‘Islam as the religion in Algeria and Arabic as its only language’.

In *Blue, Blanc, Vert* (2006), Maïssa Bey, another Francophone writer, recalls the post-independence era and narrates the linguistic situation in Algeria and its tight relationship to nationalism. The novel challenges the Arabisation project and sees the imposition of SA as the ‘perseverance of certain colonial modes of domination’ (referring to the Frenchification¹¹⁸ policy). Ali, the main character in the novel and who belongs to the generation of Algerians who opted to stay and study in the country, says:

“In court, the divisions are becoming more and more visible. There are those who studied in the brother countries, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Jordan... Those who, like me and thousands others, stayed in Algeria, who were taught by teachers, French for the most part, but under the guidance of an Algerian minister, and conforming to his directives. Where’s the problem?” (Bey, 2006: 145).

The quote highlights complicated issues related to authenticity, nationalism and Arabness. The country became divided into Francophones, (referred to as *Hizb Fransa*: French Party), and Arabophones: these were Algerians taught in ‘brother’ countries or by teachers from Arab states brought in to Arabise the country, some of whom were from Egypt and were sympathisers or active members of the Muslim

¹¹⁷ Association of Algerian *ulama* Founded in 1931 by Abd al-Hamid ibn Badis and other religious scholars to educate Algerians, promote the Arab-Islamic culture and national identity of Algeria and to revive and reform Islam. Most importantly, its aim was to protest against colonialism.

¹¹⁸ Frenchification is the linguistic policy imposing the use of the French language in political, administrative, legal, and educational institutions and relegating Arabic and Berber to the status of a second language.

Brotherhood Movement. This linguistic division continued to affect intellectuals and artists in the uprising of the 1980s and the civil war of the 1990s who spoke out and who used French or Berber. Fadhila Al Farouq, a Berber, Arabophone writer says in a personal interview (14/10/2014) that she feels trapped between her native Berber language and the language she uses for writing, which is Arabic. She says: *“I now started to hate Arabic...I feel trapped, I can’t publish in the language I was brought up with (Tamazight) and cannot in French either... my only medium is Arabic, which was imposed on me at a very early age, at the primary school. I would only speak Berber privately with a friend in hiding. I felt the pain of the ‘ablation’ from my roots in Arris¹¹⁹ and my language Tamazight (Chaoui) to find myself in a new environment (school) forced to speak Arabic”*. She adds: *“Tamazight, for me, was for the private sphere and represents intimacy and closeness”*. This is illustrated in her novel *Taa Al Khajal* where Al Farouq’s victim (Yamina) is a Berber woman from Arris and so is the narrator in the novel, who says:

"ابتسمت لها، و اقتربت منها أكثر و حدثتها بالشاوية"

“I smiled at her and I came closer to her and spoke to her in Chaouia¹²⁰”

Yamina says: "لو كنت من غير أهلي لما حدثتك عن شيء"

“If you weren’t from my people, I wouldn’t have told you anything”

Closeness is achieved when words are expressed in the same language of thinking. Words come spontaneously and effortlessly. But the language issue escalated to become a source and means of fear. As Apter rightly argues, *“fear of accusation of*

119 Arris is a Berber town in the Eastern part of Algeria (Chaouia region)

120 Chaouia is a variety of the Berber language spoken in the Aurès region (Berber: Awras) of eastern Algeria and surrounding areas.

blasphemy and apostasy; the fear of fatwa unilaterally issued by hardline Islamists against those who would 'literally' interpret Koranic references; and finally, the fear of death" (Apter, 2006: 95). Those who escaped death threats left to become political refugees in France, vacating the cultural scene in Algeria, leaving room for the extremists to implement the Islamisation of the country.

b) Algerian Intellocide

Silence means death

If you speak out, they kill you.

If you keep silent, they kill you.

So, speak out and die

Tahar Djaout

Tahar Djaout, was one of the first renowned intellectuals to be assassinated, in 1993. Editor of the francophone newspaper *El Watan*, and coordinator of the review *Ruptures*, Djaout's conscious decision to write in French was to rebel against the oppression of Berber identity imposed through the Arabization project. French for him, like for Djébar, becomes a language of protest, and "Djaout explicitly divorces writing from national identity, using literature and journalism to invent new landscapes and to conceive alternative idiolects" (Hiddleston, 2005: 8). This decision cost him and many other Francophone writers their lives in what Bensmaïa (1997: 86) calls 'intellectual cleansing'. For the Islamists, it was clear that any opposition to their agenda would mean death, as declared by Mourad Si Ahmed,

known as Djamel Al Afghani, the author of this terrible sentence: “*Journalists who wage war on Islam with their pens will perish by our swords*”.¹²¹ The list includes: Tahar Djaout, Youcef Sebti, Abdelkader Alloula, Lounes Matoub and many more, who were considered infidels. Women journalists were also targeted. In a recent interview 15.2.2017, Salima Tlemçani a renowned journalist says: “*To find yourself on a list of journalists sentenced to death was very hard to endure and live. You get to rub shoulders with death on a daily basis and you end up admitting that you will die, your only wish is to be an immediate death. Not a suffering, throat cutting with a non-sharp knife to death or tortured, violated or whatever. For 10 years, yes I got scared. Fear of losing a family member, killed because of me. I lived with fear to find myself in the hands of a group this bloodthirsty and savage. I lived with fear to get to the office and to learn of the death of a colleague, murdered. When the gesture the more banal, like to go and buy some croissants next door, just there at the bottom of the house, becomes dangerous, it's over*”.¹²² Having said that, Benoune (2013: 126) recalls Belhouchet, an outspoken journalist of *El Watan* (Nation) who witnessed the assassination of his fellow colleagues affirms his determination to continue to work despite the atrocities “*Belhouchet decided right that, in honour of those who died at their desks, he and his surviving colleagues would get the next day's edition out, no matter what*”. This determination and defiance is the core theme of a film by Abderahim Laloui, presented in the following section.

¹²¹ For more information, see: <http://www.humanite.fr/retour-sur-le-massacre-huis-clos-des-journalistes-algeriens-564025>

¹²² Salima Tlemçani, 15th February 2017. For more information, see: <http://www.valledaostaglocal.it/2017/02/15/leggi-notizia/argomenti/voix-du-monde/articolo/salima-tlemcani-etre-femme-journaliste-en-algerie.html>

As part of my data collection, I attended an event organised by Djazairouna, on the 1st and 2nd November 2016, entitled 'Notre Memoire, Notre Lutte' (our memory, our fight), during which three films were chosen. 'Mémoires de Scènes' (2016) (Memoirs of Scenes) was one of the films selected. It is by Abderahim Laloui (Algerian film director). It tells a story which takes place at the beginning of what is known as 'the Black Decade of the 1990s', during which Algeria had witnessed extreme violence. The film portrays the life of Azzedine, a journalist who loves theatre and prepares an adaptation of the famous play by Molière, entitled 'Tartuffe'. Helped by a group of friends, all amateur actors, he began rehearsals at the theatre of the city. The Mayor of the city, a fanatic, tries to stop them. However, Azzedine and his friends decided to stick together and ignore the threats made against them. Yousra, Azzedine's wife, who also plays a role in the play, tries to reassure her husband and create a climate of serenity within his family. The story fluctuates between the 'tartufferies' and the daily life of this amateur theatre troupe. After several months of preparation and rehearsals, on the performance day, while the cast looks forward to the arrival of Azzedine and his wife, the horrible news of their assassination is heard. The play represents the atmosphere of the beginning of the 1990s by referring to the assassination of leading figures in culture, namely the journalist and writer Tahar Djaout and the film director Abdelkader Alloula. The film is played by well-known Algerian actors, such as the icon of the Algerian film, Farida Saboundji and Chafia Boudraa. From an interview with the co- scenarist Mr. Benkamla (24.03.17), I found out that the film project started off back in 2006 and could not be realised until 2016 due to so many difficulties.

c) 'Untranslatability' of the unspeakable

This section focusses on another type of untranslatability, often taken for granted, which is not related to transferring one language into another. It deals with a more complex typology, which is concerned with the act of translating trauma into words. It is about analysing texts that depict the act of translating trauma. Translation in this context is used in its broadest sense and does not only mean the act of rendering a text from a source to a target language, but also the act of transmitting, conveying feelings and converting them into words. When we address the act of translating trauma, a translation activity within the same language takes place; it is the act of converting the unimaginable into words in the same language. It is dealing with the unspeakable, which is 'not necessarily unrepresentable' (El Nossery and Hubbell, 2013). Therefore, representing the unspeakable is possible; but as Nietzsche and Bergson

'[m]aintain that it is an illusion to believe that we can feel or even imagine pain that has not been personally experienced, and that our capacity is limited to observing it with heightened attention' (cited by El Nossery (ibid: 11)).

The unspeakable or the 'untranslatable', in other words, what could not be translated into words of one's experience is complicated to say the least but to speak on behalf of someone else's is illusionary, as stated above. What is not illusionary though is the imaginative ways writers depict trauma not necessarily through pain-related lexicon but also through 'the aesthetic of chaos' (ibid). Al Farouq, in her novel *Taa Al Khajal* (2005), considered the first novel to tackle the issue of rape in the 1990s, focuses on

the polyrhythmic and polyphonic structure of bodily voices and on syntactic repetition of the traumatic event (ibid). When she says:

وحدهن المغتصابات يعرفن معنى انتهاك الجسد، و انتهاك الأنا

وحدهن يعرفن وصمة العار، وحدهن يعرفن التشرد، والدعارة

"والانتحار، وحدهن يعرفن الفتاوى التي أباحت "الاغتصاب

Only raped women know what it means to violate the body, to violate the self/ego.

Only they know shame, homelessness and prostitution

and suicide; only they know fatwas which have permitted 'rape'.

Al Farouq's style changes into a fragmented one in the above quote and is characterised by repetition and unfinished sentences. The layout of the lines one after the other is similar to a poem rather than prose. She opts for an ellipsis overloaded with defiant words to a culture that finds talking about prostitution a taboo, talking about virginity a taboo and defying a fatwa to articulate the unsaid about rape, a taboo. By bringing up the word fatwa, Al Farouq casts doubts on the integrity of the religious institution as such.

As mentioned earlier, the word rape in Arabic is put between inverted commas "الاغتصاب" because it is a controversial term in Arab culture and because the writer wanted to emphasise the word as it has different connotations in Islamic terminology. Words from Classical Arabic that allow violating women's bodies such as 'sabi', 'jihad al nikah'¹²³ and others have re-emerged in recent years in relation to, for

¹²³ Jihad al nikah (جهاد النكاح) refers to the claimed practice in which Sunni women, sympathetic to the Salafi jihadism, travel to the battlefields and are allegedly voluntarily offering themselves to rebels, fighting for the creation of the Islamic Caliphate. They are expected to be repeatedly in a temporary

example, Yazidi women captured as sex slaves and before that, in Algeria in the 1990s. For Al Farouq, there was one word only that captures the meaning of all those terms. It is "الاغتصاب" (rape) and not any other, as indicated in the quote above. Al Farouq could have used other words from her mother tongues, Berber and Algerian dialect. The use of the Standard Language aims at distinguishing it from the common language used by Algerians. In practical terms, the use of SA in most of the Arabic-speaking region is an “exclusive code mastered by only few intellectuals and not by the mass populations” (Bassiouney, 2014). This is because it is not the spoken language and is different from the dialects. Al Farouq’s use of Standard Arabic indicates the symbolic power the religious institution has and how it manipulates society by disguising words such as rape. Here, the ‘theological untranslatability’ (Apter, 2013) is not only due to the complexity of the language but also to the theological interpretations associated with it.

Chapter Four of Al Farouq’s novel is called دعاء الكارثة (Prayer for Disaster) in which she directly attacks the religious institution, more precisely the mosque, for inciting violence. She then relates the new gender discourses that call for segregation between Algerians, between those who follow the Islamic party (Front Islamique du Salut; FIS) and the rest of the population. She goes further by considering the FIS as the new vogue/fashion. Al Farouq states:

الناس هنا لا يخالفون ما تقوله المآذن حتى حين قالت

"اللهم زن بناتهم".

قالوا: آمين

marriage, serving sexual comfort roles to help boost the fighters' morale. The practice in modern states is referred to as legalising ‘prostitution’.

وحتى حين قالت

"اللهم يتم أولادهم"

قالوا: آمين

:وحتى حين قالت:

"اللهم رمل نساءهم".

قالوا: آمين

كانوا قد اصابوا بحمى جبهة الانقاذ، فغنوا جميعا بعيون مغمضة دعاء الكارثة.

She adds:

...كانت موضحة جبهة الانقاذ

People here do not disagree with what the Minarets say, even when these said:

"Please God, prostitute their daughters".

People said: Amen

Even when they said:

"Please God make the children orphans"

People said: Amen

And even when minarets said:

"Please God widow their wives".

They said: Amen

They were all struck down with FIS fever, they all sang with blinded eyes the Prayer for Disaster.

The above sheds lights on religious discourses in Algeria in the 1990s and more importantly on the ‘feminine question’ as it is referred to in Algeria (la question féminine). The ‘othering’ speech in the prayer clearly differentiates between ‘us’ the religious people and ‘them’, the secular and sometimes implying the non-Muslims. The multiplicity of discourses regarding women in Islam is not new; there have always been those who call for the return of Sharia’ and those who call for reforms of civil law and for a clear secular ideology. Tunisia was a notable exception where President Bourguiba banned the Sharia and applied of Civil Law in 1956. This diversity of discourses contributes to the growth of gender-based writings.

Women’s writing in Algeria, as opposed to the male-dominated literature, offer as Brinda (2014: 27) suggests, “*gendered perspectives that feminize and complicate Algerian historicity and postcolonial subjectivity*”. She adds “*Algerian authors dispel monolithic representation of women as passive victims of colonial and nationalist and religious ideology, even as they demonstrate how masculinist ethics of war have ravaged the female body and women’s history through violence, silencing and exclusion*”. After independence, female Algerian writers took on board the mission of giving voice to their fellow Algerian women who could not write, among them Assia Djebar, Malika Mokeddem, Leïla Sebbar, Maïssa Bey, Nina Bouraoui and many more. These writers learnt the lesson that “*silence is a crime*” as stated by Miriam Cooke in her book *Women and the War Story* (1996: 8).

The inability to translate or the ‘untranslatability’ of feelings of trauma and pain into words is tantamount to resisting comprehension of what goes on around us.

This untranslatability is not restricted to one language or another; it is universal. Judith Herman's book *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) analyses the universality of the effects of trauma and provides a language for discussing the trauma of rape. Her work has brought to the public sphere an issue considered as a taboo for a long time. Unlike El Nossery and Hubbell (2013), who believe, as mentioned above, that the 'unspeakable, is 'not necessarily unrepresentable', trauma studies is "*characterized by unrepresentability, inexpressibility, and its inability to be assimilated into narrative: for Cathy Caruth (1996), for example, trauma is known only in the way it returns to haunt the individual, often many years after the original event*" (Kelly and Rye, 2009: 48).

Confirming Caruth's argument, it was only after nearly twenty years, when the only witness and survivor, decided to talk for the first time about the 12 teachers, from the Western part of Algeria (near Sidi Bel Abbes), who were slaughtered by Islamic Fundamentalists. The only survivor of that carnage was the minibus driver, who was intentionally spared so that the horror could be told in detail. The teachers were young women; the oldest was not yet forty years old. For Sidi Bel Abbes, the case represents a profound cultural trauma. "*As opposed to psychological or physical trauma, which involves a wound and the experience of great emotional anguish by an individual, cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion*". In this sense, the trauma is not only individual but collective. It may also be called 'national trauma'. Eyrman (2001: 2) states that "*Arthur Neal (1998) defines a 'national trauma' according to its 'enduring effects,' and as relating to events 'which cannot be easily dismissed, which will be played over again and again in individual consciousness', becoming 'ingrained in collective memory*". The killing of

the teachers has been remembered every September by some organisations such as Djzairouna, Réseau Wassyla, SOS Disparus, Observatoire Violence Femme OVIF and some few others from the Education sector, despite the Amnesty Law (1999-2005) that forbids people from commemorating the ‘Black Decade’. In a personal interview on the 27th September 2016, the driver remembers the event and says:

“I was driving slowly, in the usual routine. Reaching the top of a slope, about 7 km from Ain Adden going to Sfisef, with 6 female and 1 male teachers on board, I ... came across a fake roadblock set up by terrorists, who already had arrested four more cars, including one carrying 5 teachers”. He adds: “A terrorist ran towards me pointing his ‘Mahchoucha’ and shouted that I should park to the right. He ordered me to get off the vehicle, to hand him the keys and go join the group of people who had gathered on the other side. Then the other terrorists brought down the 5 teachers who were in the other vehicle to put them with those who were in mine, not without having robbed them of their bags and jewellery. ...They initially decided to immolate them, after they had sprayed fuel on them. While some were about to prepare the fuel, one bloodthirsty man changed his mind and decided to kill them. When they were all grouped together, Sabeur chose to attempt an escape, hopping off and heading to the forest. Unfortunately he was hit by a burst of the gunfire, and later to be slaughtered. The other assassins killed the 11 teachers pitilessly. At that time, I did not hear the screams and cries. The whole operation took nearly ten minutes, so that all the space was transformed into a pool of blood. I left. Before they released us, the terrorists “preached” to us and insisted that we should absolutely not talk about the killings and especially not to vote. I took to the road, like a robot, absent minded, mentally and physically destroyed wondering if it was just a nightmare and I would wake up, or a sad reality!” (27/09/2016). The testimony by the driver, an ordinary person who

was driving on a routine journey to Sfisef, a village in the North Western part of Algeria is compelling. Twenty years on, he describes vividly the horrific incident in disbelief. He still wonders whether the brutal incident was just a nightmare. In a way, this disbelief stems from the inability to make sense of what happened, to digest the incident. It is an incomprehensibility of the reality, which offers fewer words, if any, to circumvent its untranslatability. The fact that he was the only survivor meant that he is the only witness to what had happened, which added to the burden of narrating the story and translating his pain into words.

For Anne Whitehead, cited in Kelly and Ryle (2009: 48), “*though, by the very nature of its creativity, innovation, literary devices and techniques, fiction is able to represent what ‘cannot be represented by conventional historical, cultural and autobiographical narratives’*”.

The killing of the teachers was translated into various forms of cultural production, such as the film (*El Manara* by Belkacem Hedjaj). Djebbar was among the first to respond to the killing of the teachers in her short stories *Oran, Langue Morte* (1997). In a chapter called “*La Femme en Morceaux*” (The Woman in Pieces), Atyka, a female teacher of French at a high school decides to tell her students a tale from *A Thousand and One Nights* when four armed men burst into the classroom and executed Atyka in front of the children in her classroom. Atyka is accused of teaching obscene stories to the children. It is interesting to note that Djebbar’s choice of the form of narrative as a tale of *A Thousand and One Nights* with Shehrazade as narrator has been used extensively in Algerian literature. The concept of ‘return to the past’, which the Islamists proclaimed in order to oppress women, is employed by Djebbar to evoke memories of violence against women through the Muslim past and the present. Djebbar portrays the untranslatable past through a similar untranslatable

present to argue that there is a need to break with the tradition of violence. More importantly, she depicts the past as ‘untranslatable’ in today’s present. Walter Benjamin refers to this as ‘Cultural untranslatability’, which stands for the inability of translate the past in to our daily activities automatically, without questioning it. ‘Cultural untranslatability’ in the case of Algeria relates to the failure to understand a past that denotes either a future of violence or no future at all.

Untranslatability for Djébar is what drives her to write and translate her ideas and feelings into words by making the traumatic past representable. She is aware that literary and visual arts can be mechanisms for transmitting what can be unspeakable or untranslatable. Literature and the arts can bear witness for those who cannot express themselves and might help them to re-join their communities. For Djébar, what is ‘translatable’ is recording those atrocities and preventing the ‘authority’ (le pouvoir) from writing their own history, something that was done with regard to the War of Liberation in 1962. Aware of the importance of narrative, Djébar needed to ‘translate’ stories, moments, and feelings and to give voices, particularly to women who have been silenced throughout Algerian contemporary history. Djébar is well aware of her mission of combining the literary with historiography. She is conscious of the tolerance and the openness to interpretation she has over her literary texts, but at the same time she is experienced enough to know that those texts have “a certain integrity, a national inalterability, that poses a fundamental problem for paraphrase and for translation” (Harrison, 2014: 418). This national inalterability for Djébar does not mean the official history; it simply means the national truth that had been eclipsed for Algerians for decades. Harisson argues in in his article, ‘World Literature: What gets lost in Translation?’ (2014) that “*it is not ‘translatability’ that decides what gets translated. Indeed, untranslatability, or the ‘impossibility’ of translation, clearly*

attracts some translators, and may help make their translation compelling creative works”.

As mentioned, the atrocities lived in Algeria in the 1990s were unimaginable. In her novel *les Nouvelles d’Algerie* (1998), Maissa Bey in the chapter entitled ‘Corps indicible’ ‘indescribable body’ finds it impossible to find words that can describe the horrors of the young girl. She says:

‘C’est ça faire sortir de moi les mots pour dire. Mais je ne peux plus parler. J’ai perdu ma voix’. This is making words come out of me to say. But, I can no longer speak. I lost my voice.’ She adds: *"Ya plus que ces mots en moi qui viennent dans ma tête s’entrechoquent me font mal faut les arrêter c’est ça dresser un barrage pierre a pierre une à une ajoutée les empêcher de pénétrer”* (110).

“There are more than these words in me coming into my head, colliding, hurting; I have to stop them through building one stone dam, stone after another, preventing them from penetrating”.

The impossibility of finding words, of completing sentences, finishing an idea is expressed in Bey’s novels. The narrative voice is voiceless, it is rendered silent.

In the same vein, al Farouq, says:

طوال الطريق و أنا أفكر كيف سأكتب في الموضوع، بأية صيغة، بأي قلب، بأي لغة، بأي قلم؟ أقلام القرابة لا "تحب التعدي".

I was thinking all the way about how to write about the topic, in which way, with which heart, in what language, with what pen? The Pens of kin don’t like to transgress.

She adds:

"كيف هي الكتابة عن أنثى سرقت عذريتها عنوة؟"

"How can one write about a female whose virginity was stolen from her by force?"

In the next section, I will go beyond the language situation in Algeria, the translation of trauma, and the local dynamics of the country to discuss the untranslatability of Algeria globally. In other words, I will try to answer the question: how is Algeria translated or untranslated in the world?

d) External 'untranslatability'

The low visibility of Algeria in the global market of translation is very similar to other Arabic-speaking as well as French-speaking countries. In fact, the uneven nature of global market forces is a topic that needs further investigation. The visibility "depends firstly on the position of its country of location and language in the world market of translation (central versus peripheral), secondly on its position within the linguistic area (central versus peripheral; for instance the United States versus India in the Anglophone area), and thirdly on its position within the national field (temporally and/or symbolically dominant versus dominated) (Gisèle Sapiro, 2015: 22). In the case of Algerian literature, belonging to two linguistic sources (Francophone as well as Arabophone) does not really help to enhance its chances of being included among those literatures being translated globally. According to Sapiro, between 1990 to 2003, while French literature by French writers reached 858 translations; only 16 titles were by Algerian writers. Among the 16 titles, only authors like Assia Djebar, Kateb Yassine, Rachid Mimmouni, Mouloud Feraoun, Mohamed Dib and a few

others are translated into English. In other words, the first generation of writers largely is the one that got translated. The same applies to Arabic literature as a whole, where the most translated writers are the well-known ones like the Egyptian Nobel Prize Laureate Najib Mahfouz, the Sudanese Tayib Saleh and a few others. The Algerian Tahar Wattar has been translated into English together with others from the first generation of Algerians writing in Arabic. Ahlem Mosteghanemi has recently been translated into English. As far as literature of 1990s Algeria is concerned, despite the boom of writing, the number of titles translated is very limited, if not to say non-existent. Emily Apter (2006, 2013), Wail Hasan (2006) and a few other scholars have written about the ‘untranslatability’ of Arabic Literature and about the visibility of the same few names who “are universally acclaimed, excellent writers” (Apter, 2006, 98). In fact, when we talk about ‘untranslatable’ Algeria in terms of its low visibility, one could say that this problem exists not only in relation to translating into the dominant language (centre and periphery) but it is also relevant to translation into Arabic from French, due to the gulf between Arabophone and Francophone writers. In other words, Algerian Francophone writers, even well-known ones like Assia Djébar, are not translated into Arabic. It is only after her death, that the Algerian Ministry of Culture has commissioned Djébar’s books for translation into Arabic. In other words, the ‘untranslatability’ of Algeria is not only external but also internal. A related issue is the gap of knowledge between academic literature written in Arabic and in French, which is fragmentary due to disciplinary constraints and to the complexity of the linguistic situation in Algeria. This is why academic work on, for example, Francophone writers do not give the full national picture due to the nature of the divisions between the languages studied in academia.

III. Conclusion

Although there has been a boom in fictional writing in both Arabic and French, research on the 1990s in Algeria (the Black Decade) dealing with the issue of sexual violence/rape is scarce. This is largely due to the Amnesty Law (1999, 2005), which forbids people from looking into that past period. These limitations highlight the unusual nature of the research in this article. What is interesting to note is that fictional writing about the 1990s has seen a boom in recent years in both Arabic and French.

In this article, I provide an extensive study of the concept of ‘untranslatability’ (Apter, 2013) from both theoretical and practical perspectives. While Apter presents the concept of untranslatability as a homogenous notion, I expand it by adding typologies that help to illustrate the idea further. This is done using practical examples from various mediums such as personal interviews conducted by the researcher, novels and testimonies in the two working languages in Algeria, French and Arabic. For example, when analysing the language situation in Algeria, the issue of untranslatability is not only confined to the linguistic battle between Arabophones, Berberophones or Francophones, but also is used to illustrate the dynamics of silencing in postcolonial Algeria. By this I mean, that the language politics in Algeria elucidate the manipulations done under the Arabisation movement in for example silencing one group or another. The silencing is a form of untranslatability linked directly to the linguicide in the country. Under the Arabisation movement motive, a number of Francophone and Berberophone intellectuals were killed and others sought refuge in France, which helped emptying the country from its elite in what is known as ‘intellocide’. Theological untranslatability is another type discussed in this article,

which is related to the relationship between the theological concepts and their translations in the present time (see the example of *sabi* discussed above). In fact, the theological interpretations exacerbated a violence regarding what and how concepts are translated or untranslated. In other words, the relationship between what can be translated is not an easy one when one gets to how it can be translated, bearing in mind the historicity as well as the temporality of concepts. The untranslatabilities of Algeria are also intensified by external factors due to the low visibility of Arabic literature in general and Algerian in particular. This low visibility does not only concern writings in Arabic, but also in French (Francophone literature). Among the writers translated, only the first generation ones such as, Tahar Wattar (from Arabic into English) and Kateb Yassine (from French into English). The case of Algeria represents one example of the 'imposed' untranslatability' is inflicted by unequal power relations in the world. The hegemony of English, which Bassnett describes 'as uni-directional' plays a big role in the case of untranslatability. Finally, an important type of untranslatability, which is central to this article, is the complexity of translating feelings of trauma into words. Words used to represent and describe the unspeakable, such as rape in a culture like Arabo-Muslim. The 'social role' of the translator (Toury, 1993) is connected to the writer's intricacy of translating themes like 'rape'. By this I mean, that the translator is in a similar situation to the writer in that he/she may deem the text untranslatable.

Classifying a range of untranslatabilities, not particularly in any order, advances the concept further and opens further discussion. The ideas and examples discussed within each section act as suggestions as to how we can classify untranslatabilities. Here, untranslatability is recognised as a dynamic concept, which may change and may include other areas. The discussion draws on the areas of

linguistics, semantics, theories of language and power, and literature to present texts where untranslatability is present. The point of emphasising the various classifications of the concept of untranslatability is to facilitate a clearer understanding both in theory and in practice. The concluding remarks of this article is that the concept of untranslatability is an organic concept that affects all languages and a number of disciplines and any attempt to raise discussions on how to develop it will only enhance it.

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