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Domestication and Cultural Loss in Translating Islamic Theological References in Naguib Mahfouz's Awlad Haretna: A Comparative Study of Theroux and Stewart

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Abstract

This study investigates domestication and cultural loss in the English translation of Islamic theological references in Naguib Mahfouz's Awlad Haretna. It compares Philip Stewart's Children of Gebelawi (1981) and Peter Theroux's Children of the Alley (1996), concentrating on four source-text expressions: al-hamdu lillah (الحمد لله), al-'afw (العفو), al-Jabbar (الجبار), and al-amr li-sahib al-amr (الأمر لصاحب الأمر). The study adopts a qualitative comparative design within descriptive translation studies. Newmark's translation procedures are used to identify the local operations applied to each item, while Venuti's domestication-foreignization distinction is used to interpret their broader cultural orientation. Cultural loss is assessed across five dimensions: denotative meaning, theological intertextuality, pragmatic function, rhetorical form, and allegorical contribution. The analysis shows that both translators preserve the immediate propositional meaning of most expressions but frequently reduce their Islamic theological resonance. Theroux tends to favor idiomatic, target-oriented equivalents, whereas Stewart occasionally preserves a more explicit religious register; nevertheless, neither translation consistently retains the source items' full semantic and allegorical density. The greatest loss occurs in al-Jabbar, whose simultaneous function as a political accusation and a divine-name allusion is reduced to a secular insult. The study concludes that effective translation of such references requires selective foreignization supported by concise contextualization rather than either literal transfer or unrestricted domestication.

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Keywords: (Localization; Cultural Loss; Islamic Theological References).

التوطين والفقد الثقافي في ترجمة الإشارات اللاهوتية الإسلامية في رواية نجيب محفوظ "أولاد حارتنا ": دراسة مقارنة لترجمتي ثيرو وستيوارت

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الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في التوطين والفقد الثقافي عند ترجمة الإشارات اللاهوتية الإسلامية في رواية نجيب محفوظ »أولاد حارتنا «إلى الإنجليزية، من خلال المقارنة بين ترجمة فيليب ستيوارت Children of Gebelawi الصادرة سنة 1981، وترجمة بيتر ثيرو Children of the Alley الصادرة سنة 1996.ويركز البحث على أربعة تعبيرات هي» :الحمد لله«، و»العفو«، و»الجبار«، و»الأمر لصاحب الأمر .«اعتمدت الدراسة منهجًا نوعيًا مقارنًا ضمن إطار دراسات الترجمة الوصفية، واستعانت بإجراءات نيومارك لتحليل القرارات الترجمية على المستوى الجزئي، وبثنائية فينوتي :التوطين والتغريب، لتفسير التوجه الثقافي العام .وقُيّم الفقد الثقافي في ضوء خمسة أبعاد :المعنى الدلالي المباشر، والتناص اللاهوتي، والوظيفة التداولية، والصياغة البلاغية، والدور المجازي في بنية الرواية .أظهرت النتائج أن المترجمين حافظا غالبًا على المعنى المباشر، إلا أنهما خفّضا بدرجات متفاوتة الحمولة الإسلامية والتناص الديني للتعابير .ومال ثيرو إلى البدائل الإنجليزية المألوفة، في حين حافظ ستيوارت أحيانًا على سجل ديني أكثر وضوحًا، لكن أياً منهما لم ينقل الكثافة الدلالية والمجازية كاملة .وظهر أشد الفقد في ترجمة »الجبار«، إذ اختُزل تداخلها بين الاتهام السياسي والإيحاء باسم إلهي إلى شتيمة سياسية علمانية .وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن ترجمة هذه الإشارات تتطلب تغريبًا انتقائيًا تدعمه إضاءة سياقية مقتضبة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (التوطين، الفقد الثقافي، الإشارات اللاهوتية الإسلامية).

1. Introduction

Literary translation is not limited to replacing one sequence of words with another. It is a culturally situated act in which meanings are selected, reorganized, emphasized, or suppressed as a text moves

between interpretive communities. This point becomes especially important in Arabic-English translation because many Arabic literary expressions derive part of their force from Islamic discourse, Qur'anic phraseology, inherited moral concepts, and socially conventional religious formulas. Such expressions may remain transparent to an Arabic reader even when they are not direct quotations from scripture. Their meaning is activated by shared linguistic memory. An English equivalent may therefore reproduce the immediate denotation while failing to transmit the cultural and theological associations that make the expression significant in its original context.

Naguib Mahfouz's Awlad Haretna is an especially productive text for examining this problem. First serialized in 1959, the novel reconstructs prophetic and religious history within the social geography of a Cairene alley. Its characters, places, conflicts, and institutions function simultaneously on realistic and allegorical levels. The narrative can be read as a story about social hierarchy, poverty, violence, and the pursuit of justice, but it also repeatedly invokes the symbolic structures of the Abrahamic traditions. As El-Enany (1993) observes, Mahfouz's allegorical method depends on the coexistence of ordinary social detail and a wider metaphysical pattern. The theological force of a word or phrase is therefore rarely ornamental. It contributes to the double coding through which the alley becomes both a local Egyptian community and a condensed history of humanity.

The novel exists in two major English translations. Philip Stewart's Children of Gebelawi appeared in 1981, while Peter Theroux's

retranslation, Children of the Alley, appeared in 1996. The chronological order is important because the translations emerged under different publishing conditions and address partly different readerships. Stewart's version was the first full English translation and often retains an elevated or visibly mediated style. Theroux's later version generally pursues greater narrative fluency. These tendencies do not make one translation categorically faithful and the other unfaithful; rather, they create different balances between readability, cultural signaling, and semantic precision.

The present article narrows the wider cultural analysis of the parent thesis to a specific and analytically coherent problem: the treatment of Islamic theological references. It examines four expressions selected from three passages: الحمد لله(al-hamdu lillah), العفو(al-'afw), الجبار(al-Jabbar), and الأمر لصاحب الأمر(al-amr li-sahib al-amr). These expressions differ in form and function. One is a conventional formula of praise and gratitude; one is a moral concept rooted in an Islamic semantic field; one combines a divine-name resonance with a political accusation; and one is a formula of resignation that echoes Islamic conceptions of divine command. Their diversity permits a more precise account of how cultural loss operates than a general comparison of isolated vocabulary.

The central argument is that cultural loss in these cases does not normally take the form of complete mistranslation. Both translators usually communicate a plausible surface meaning. Loss occurs instead through semantic narrowing, pragmatic change, rhetorical flattening, or the removal of intertextual signals. The distinction is crucial. A

translation may be linguistically acceptable and narratively coherent while still reducing the cultural architecture of the source text. Accordingly, this study evaluates not only whether an English expression means approximately the same thing, but also whether it performs the same social action, activates a comparable theological field, preserves marked rhetorical structure, and supports the novel's allegorical design.

The study addresses three questions: How do Stewart and Theroux translate the selected Islamic theological references? Which local procedures and broader orientations characterize their choices? What kinds of cultural loss result, and what alternative solutions could preserve more of the source text without making the English version unreadable? By answering these questions, the article seeks to contribute a focused case study to Arabic-English literary translation and to propose a practical method for evaluating culturally dense religious language.

2. Theoretical Framework

The analysis combines three compatible perspectives: culture-specific items, translation procedures, and domestication versus foreignization. The first perspective identifies why the selected expressions create a translation problem; the second describes what the translator does at the level of the individual item; and the third interprets the cumulative cultural direction of those decisions.

Newmark (1988) defines culture in relation to forms of life and expression specific to a community and treats culturally embedded

words as a major area of translation difficulty. His procedures include transference, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, synonymy, modulation, recognized translation, reduction, expansion, compensation, and paraphrase. These categories are useful because they distinguish operations that might otherwise be grouped under the vague label of free translation. A translator who replaces an Arabic formula with a conventional English idiom is not doing the same thing as a translator who expands its meaning or retains its Arabic form. Newmark's framework permits these differences to be named and compared.

Aixelá (1996) develops a relational account of culture-specific items: an item becomes culturally problematic not simply because it belongs to one culture, but because its textual function or intertextual status has no direct equivalent in the target system. This principle is particularly applicable to theological language. English contains words such as God, mercy, forgiveness, tyrant, and command; consequently, the difficulty is not always lexical absence. The problem is that the source item may occupy a different position in Islamic discourse. The Arabic الجبار, for instance, can function as an accusation of coercive tyranny while simultaneously recalling al-Jabbar, one of the divine names. English oppressor and tyrant capture the accusation but not the sacred intertext. The translation problem arises from unequal cultural activation rather than dictionary deficiency.

Venuti's (1995, 2008) distinction between domestication and foreignization provides the macro-level interpretive frame.

Domestication reduces the linguistic or cultural strangeness of the source text by aligning it with target-language norms. Foreignization preserves or deliberately signals difference, requiring the reader to encounter aspects of the source culture on terms not fully assimilated to familiar usage. The distinction should not be treated as a rigid binary. A single rendering can preserve one feature and domesticate another, and a generally fluent translation may contain local foreignizing moments. In this study, the terms indicate tendencies along a continuum rather than mutually exclusive categories.

Religious and theological references complicate this continuum because literalism does not automatically produce cultural fidelity. A word-for-word rendering may preserve lexical form but fail to communicate pragmatic function. Conversely, a familiar target-language formula may perform the correct speech act while replacing the source's theological identity with a generic Christian or secular register. Nida's (1964) distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence remains relevant here, but the present study adds an intertextual dimension: equivalent response cannot be assumed when the target reader lacks the religious-linguistic associations available to the source reader.

To avoid treating cultural loss as an impressionistic judgment, the study operationalizes it across five dimensions. Denotative retention concerns the immediate referential or propositional meaning. Theological-intertextual retention concerns associations with Qur'anic phraseology, divine names, Islamic moral concepts, or conventional

religious discourse. Pragmatic retention concerns what the expression does in interaction, such as praising, resigning, accusing, or responding politely. Rhetorical retention concerns repetition, marked syntax, sound patterning, and lexical ambiguity. Allegorical retention concerns the item's contribution to the novel's double structure, where social events simultaneously point toward religious history. A translation may score differently across these dimensions; therefore, cultural loss is treated as layered rather than absolute.

This multidimensional approach also addresses a limitation in some applications of domestication and foreignization. A visibly foreign word is not necessarily a successful translation, and a fluent equivalent is not necessarily a failure. The decisive question is which culturally significant functions survive. Selective foreignization is preferable when a source item carries a textual function that would otherwise disappear, but contextual explanation should remain proportionate to the literary scene. The aim is not maximal foreignness. It is the preservation of functionally relevant difference.

3. Awlad Haretna and the Function of Theological Language

Mahfouz's novel is organized through sustained interaction between the everyday and the sacred. The alley is recognizable as an Egyptian social space with strongmen, gatekeepers, households, markets, and inherited hierarchies. At the same time, its founding figures and successive reformers evoke scriptural history. This coexistence allows ordinary phrases to acquire additional weight. A religious formula

spoken in casual dialogue can affirm the realism of Muslim social life, but it can also reinforce the novel's larger theological architecture.

Somekh's (1973) account of Mahfouz's language is relevant because the novelist's prose moves between formal narration, colloquial social exchange, and Qur'anic or classical echoes. The selected expressions belong to different points on this continuum. الحمد لله is highly conventional in daily speech and is not marked as elevated, yet its wording is explicitly theological. الجبار is more semantically unstable: it can be a common political insult, a description of coercive power, and an allusion to a divine attribute. الأمر لصاحب الأمر uses repetition and formulaic balance to frame resignation through the vocabulary of command. العفو is an abstract moral noun whose root is central to Islamic discourse on pardon and divine forgiveness. Translating all four as ordinary English religious or moral vocabulary risks making the target text semantically intelligible but culturally thinner.

The theological references also shape characterization and power. When a speaker says الحمد لله in response to an inquiry about wellbeing, the phrase marks religiously inflected social identity. When a character confronts the master of the great house with الجبار, the accusation reaches beyond interpersonal hostility: it places coercive authority beside a term associated with absolute power. When الأمر لصاحب الأمر is uttered, resignation is framed not as a private psychological attitude but as submission to a higher order. These details support the novel's central tension between inherited authority and human demands for justice.

For this reason, the translation of theological language cannot be assessed only by asking whether the plot remains understandable. The plot can survive even when the theological network is weakened. The more relevant question is whether the English reader receives enough textual evidence to recognize that moral and political discourse in the alley is inseparable from religious language. The selected examples provide concentrated evidence of how that network is maintained, modified, or erased.

4. Methodology

The study uses a qualitative comparative design within descriptive translation studies (Toury, 1995). It does not begin by prescribing a single correct translation. Instead, it describes the solutions adopted in the two published English versions, identifies their procedures, and evaluates their consequences in relation to the source text's cultural and allegorical functions.

The data form a focused subcorpus drawn from the larger thesis corpus of six parallel passages and twenty-two culture-specific items. The present article isolates four Islamic theological references occurring in three passages because they produced the clearest pattern of cultural loss in the parent analysis. The Arabic source items and the relevant renderings are shown in Table 1. Arabic pagination follows the edition used in the thesis corpus; English page numbers follow the editions consulted there. Stewart's translation is cited according to its first publication in 1981, and Theroux's according to the 1996 Doubleday edition.

Each item was analyzed in four stages. First, its lexical meaning and contextual function in the Arabic passage were established. Second, the procedure used in each English version was classified with reference to Newmark's categories. Third, each rendering was located on a domestication-foreignization continuum. Fourth, loss or retention was evaluated across the five dimensions defined above. The analysis is interpretive rather than statistical, but its categories impose consistent criteria across the cases.

The study recognizes three limitations. The subcorpus is small and cannot establish the total distribution of strategies across the entire novel. The assessment of theological resonance is necessarily based on competent cultural interpretation rather than reader-response testing. Finally, the page-based editions used in the parent thesis should be checked against the researchers' physical copies before final journal submission, particularly because the two English translations have appeared in several reprints and Stewart's translation was later revised. These limitations do not invalidate the textual comparison, but they restrict claims to the selected examples.

Table 1. Focused corpus of Islamic theological references

Source-text item	Theroux (1996)	Stewart (1981)	Primary cultural-theological function
الحمد لله	God be thanked	thank God	Religious praise/gratitude formula
العفو	forgiveness	mercy	Islamic moral concept of

			pardon
الجبار	oppressor	tyrant	Political accusation with divine-name resonance
الأمر لصاحب الأمر	It's in God's hands	God is master of all things	Resignation formula and divine command

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Al-Hamdu Lillah (الحمد لله)

The expression الحمد لله occurs in a social exchange following an inquiry about health and family wellbeing. In Arabic Muslim discourse, it is both a statement of praise and a routine response. Its literal structure assigns praise to God, while its pragmatic force communicates that the speaker is well, grateful, or accepting of present circumstances. The expression therefore combines theology, politeness, identity, and conversational economy.

Theroux renders it as "God be thanked." This solution is close to a through translation and retains an overtly religious grammatical structure. Its slightly archaic English register marks the phrase as formulaic and prevents complete assimilation into casual secular conversation. Denotatively, it conveys gratitude directed toward God; pragmatically, it can function as a response to an inquiry. It nevertheless shifts the Arabic nominal formula "praise belongs to God" toward a passive verbal construction, "God be thanked." The theological concept of hamd, which combines praise, gratitude, and recognition of divine perfection, is narrowed to thanking. The rendering therefore preserves religious visibility but reduces semantic breadth.

Stewart uses the familiar phrase “thank God.” This is idiomatic and pragmatically natural in English. It clearly communicates relief or gratitude and fits conversational dialogue. However, it is more domesticating because it resembles a common English exclamation that may be used with weak religious commitment. The source formula's ritualized identity is reduced, and the response may be read as spontaneous relief rather than a conventional act of praise. Stewart preserves the social function efficiently but weakens the theological and stylistic markedness.

The comparison shows that Theroux retains more of the formulaic religious register, whereas Stewart retains greater conversational naturalness. Neither fully conveys the semantic scope of hamd. A balanced solution would be “Praise be to God,” which is established in English-language representations of Islamic discourse and preserves the central lexical concept. In a dialogue requiring naturalness, “We are well, praise be to God” could also make the pragmatic response explicit without replacing the formula. Such a rendering is selectively foreignizing: it is intelligible in English but signals a specifically religious convention rather than absorbing it into a generic exclamation.

5.2 Al-'Afw (العفو)

The noun العفوappears in a rhetorical sequence with اللينand التسامح during a confrontation: the speaker asks whether pardon, gentleness, and tolerance have any place in the addressee's great house. In this context, العفوdenotes pardon or forgiveness, but its cultural force

exceeds an abstract moral virtue. The root ع-ف-و occupies an important place in Qur'anic and Islamic discourse on erasing fault, pardoning wrongdoing, and divine forgiveness. The form used here is an abstract noun, not itself the divine name al-'Afuww; nevertheless, it activates the same moral-semantic field. This distinction is important because overstatement would be as inaccurate as undertranslation.

Theroux chooses “forgiveness.” Denotatively, this is the closest of the two English solutions. It identifies the cancellation of resentment or blame and fits the parallel sequence “forgiveness, gentleness, tolerance.” The procedure is recognized translation or close functional equivalence. Cultural loss occurs because English forgiveness does not automatically evoke the specific Islamic network associated with 'afw, and the surrounding sentence offers no signal that the term participates in a religious moral vocabulary. Yet the loss is moderate rather than total: forgiveness remains available in Christian and general theological discourse, and the abstract noun preserves the moral seriousness of the source.

Stewart renders the item as “mercy.” Mercy belongs to an explicitly theological register in English and can therefore preserve a stronger sense of hierarchical or divine compassion. However, it changes the denotation. Mercy is the compassionate withholding of punishment, whereas 'afw more specifically concerns pardon, effacement, or release from blame. The translation gains religious resonance but loses semantic precision. This is a case where cultural gain and loss occur

simultaneously. Stewart's choice is not simply more or less faithful; it reweights the item from pardon toward compassion.

A more adequate rendering would retain “pardon” or “forgiveness” and allow the religious field to emerge from context. “Pardon, gentleness, and forbearance” preserves the triadic rhetoric and differentiates the three moral concepts. A footnote would be excessive for this item unless the edition uses notes systematically. The key requirement is semantic differentiation: translating all moral terms through near-synonyms can blur the deliberate accumulation of virtues. Here selective foreignization does not require Arabic transference. It requires resisting conceptual simplification.

5.3 Al-Jabbar (الجبار)

The most complex item is الجبارin the vocative أيها الجبار. The Arabic lexeme has a dual semantic potential. In human social and political description, jabbar can mean tyrannical, coercive, overbearing, or oppressive. In Islamic theology, al-Jabbar is one of the divine names and is commonly rendered as “the Compeller,” “the Restorer,” or “the Supreme.” Mahfouz's allegorical narrative makes the coexistence of these meanings especially significant. Addressed to the master of the great house, the word can function as a direct accusation of tyranny while also activating the novel's contested representation of absolute authority.

Theroux translates the phrase as “you oppressor.” This rendering accurately identifies the victim-centered political meaning: an oppressor inflicts injustice on others. It also fits the confrontational tone. Yet it

removes the theological ambiguity completely. Oppressor is not a divine title and has no sacred or metaphysical resonance in English. The lexical choice narrows the source from a word about overpowering authority to a conventional accusation about injustice. The procedure is functional equivalence, and its orientation is strongly domesticating.

Stewart uses “you tyrant.” Tyrant is also a functional equivalent, but it emphasizes absolute or arbitrary rule rather than the act of oppression. Because tyranny concerns concentrated authority, the word comes slightly closer to the political dimension of jabbar. It may also support the feudal imagery of the great house. Nevertheless, it remains secular and unambiguous. The source word's dangerous overlap between divine omnipotence and human despotism disappears. In an allegorical novel, that loss is substantial because the reader is denied a lexical signal connecting the immediate conflict to the theological structure.

A purely literal transfer such as “O Jabbar” would preserve foreignness but would be opaque to most readers and might falsely suggest a personal name. “You compeller” is lexically closer to the divine-title translation but unnatural as a political accusation. A more effective literary solution could be “you almighty tyrant” or “you all-compelling tyrant.” The first preserves readable accusation while signaling the divine-register ambiguity through “almighty”; the second is less idiomatic but more closely reproduces coercive force. A brief endnote could explain that al-Jabbar is also a divine name. This is the clearest case in the corpus where limited paratextual support is justified because no single English word can reproduce the semantic bifurcation.

The example also demonstrates why cultural loss should not be equated with lexical error. Both “oppressor” and “tyrant” are contextually plausible and narratively effective. Their limitation is structural: each selects one branch of a deliberately doubled sign. The target text retains the social accusation but loses the theological and allegorical branch.

5.4 Al-Amr li-Sahib al-Amr (الأمر لصاحب الأمر)

The formula الأمر لصاحب الأمرmay be glossed as “the matter/command belongs to the possessor or master of the matter/command.” Its force depends on the repetition of أمرand on the polyvalence of the word, which can denote a matter, affair, order, or command. In context, the phrase expresses resignation and acknowledges that decisive authority lies elsewhere. It evokes Islamic discourse in which command and ultimate disposal belong to God, although it should be treated as an allusive formula rather than automatically classified as a direct Qur'anic quotation.

Theroux translates the phrase as “It's in God's hands.” This is a recognized English equivalent for resignation to divine will. Pragmatically, it performs the source speech act effectively and is immediately comprehensible. It is also highly domesticating. The repeated root, the distinction between command and commander, and the formal balance of the Arabic disappear. The phrase becomes a familiar English idiom. Theological reference remains explicit through “God,” but the source's linguistic texture and concept of amr are replaced by the metaphor of hands.

Stewart renders it as "God is master of all things." This paraphrase retains explicit divine authority and adopts an elevated theological register. It therefore appears less domesticated than Theroux's idiom. However, it changes the pragmatic function from resignation about a particular matter to a general doctrinal proposition. It also converts the repeated lexical relation between amr and sahib al-amr into the broader phrase "all things." Stewart preserves theology more clearly but weakens the situational speech act.

The two translations reveal opposite forms of reduction. Theroux preserves pragmatic force but loses rhetorical and conceptual structure. Stewart preserves an explicit doctrine of divine mastery but alters the conversational action. A possible alternative is "The matter belongs to the Master of all matters." This keeps the repetition and resignation while remaining interpretable. "The command belongs to the Lord of command" is closer to the source but may sound excessively scriptural or obscure. The first alternative uses capitalization to signal theological reference without requiring a note. Its slight strangeness is productive because it allows the target reader to encounter the formula as culturally marked rather than mistaking it for an ordinary English idiom.

Table 2. Procedures, orientations, and principal forms of loss

Source item	Theroux: procedure/orientation	Stewart: procedure/orientation	Principal loss or shift
الحمد لله	Through translation; mildly foreignizing	Recognized formula/paraphrase; domesticating	Hamd narrowed to thanking; formulaic Islamic identity reduced
العفو	Recognized/functional equivalent	Synonymy	Islamic moral field weakened; Stewart

			shifts pardon to mercy
الجبار	Functional equivalent; domesticating	Functional equivalent; domesticating	Divine-name allusion and semantic ambiguity lost in both
الأمر لصاحب الأمر	Recognized translation; domesticating	Expansion/paraphrase; partly foreignizing	Theroux loses rhetoric; Stewart alters pragmatic function

6. Comparative Discussion

The four cases establish a consistent pattern: immediate meaning is usually preserved more successfully than theological intertextuality and rhetorical form. Neither translator systematically deletes religion. God remains explicit in the translations of الحمد لله and الأمر لصاحب الأمر, and moral vocabulary remains serious in the rendering of العفو. The problem is subtler. Islamic formulaicity is replaced by generic English religiosity, and polyvalent theological terms are reduced to single secular meanings.

Theroux's dominant strength is pragmatic clarity. “It's in God's hands” performs resignation naturally, “forgiveness” preserves the denotation of العفو, and “oppressor” makes the accusation in الجبار immediately legible. His “God be thanked” is an exception to his otherwise highly idiomatic tendency because its archaism preserves a degree of formulaic markedness. Across the four items, however, he commonly selects the contextual meaning most necessary for plot and interaction. This prioritization produces a coherent English narrative but attenuates the source's intertextual network.

Stewart more frequently maintains an elevated religious register. “God is master of all things” is overtly theological, and “mercy” has stronger divine associations than ordinary “forgiveness.” Yet this tendency does not guarantee greater precision. “Mercy” shifts the moral concept, while the doctrinal statement about divine mastery changes the pragmatic role of the resignation formula. Stewart's version can therefore preserve cultural visibility while altering local meaning. His translation demonstrates that foreignization must be evaluated functionally: a more elevated or unusual English phrase is not necessarily closer to the source on every dimension.

The comparative results may be summarized as follows. For denotative retention, Theroux is stronger in العفو, while both translators are adequate but partial elsewhere. For theological visibility, Theroux is stronger in الحمد لله, Stewart is stronger in الأمر لصاحب الأمر, and both are weak in الجبار. For pragmatic retention, Stewart's “thank God” and Theroux's “It's in God's hands” are effective, but the former reduces formulaic identity and the latter removes rhetorical structure. For allegorical retention, both translations perform least successfully in الجبار because they eliminate the link between political accusation and divine-name resonance.

These findings support Venuti's critique of fluency but also qualify it. Domestication is not always an act of simple erasure; it may preserve a crucial pragmatic function that literal translation would lose. The ethical and literary problem arises when target-oriented fluency becomes the default solution for every layer of meaning. In Awlad

Haretna, repeated domestication of theological vocabulary gradually secularizes the verbal environment of the alley. The reader still encounters God and religious history at the level of plot, but fewer lexical signals connect daily speech and political conflict to the Islamic discursive world.

The data also show that the concept of cultural loss should allow for compensation and gain. Stewart's “mercy” loses denotative specificity but adds an English theological tone. Theroux's “God be thanked” changes the semantic structure yet preserves formulaic markedness. Such cases should not be forced into a simple successful/unsuccessful classification. A translation can gain target-language solemnity while losing source-specific intertextuality. The analytical task is to identify which dimension has been altered and whether that alteration matters to the literary function of the passage.

At the level of procedure, functional equivalence and recognized translation account for most of the domesticating choices. Paraphrase appears when a compact Arabic formula has no direct English counterpart. None of the selected items is transferred in Arabic, and no translator uses a note to preserve a theological ambiguity. This absence is understandable in a novel intended for continuous reading, but it places a heavy burden on lexical choice. Where the source contains irreducible dual meaning, as in الجبار, a strategically placed endnote or glossary entry may be less disruptive than silently sacrificing one interpretive layer.

The study therefore proposes a Cultural-Theological Retention Sequence for practice. The translator should first identify whether an item carries only religious subject matter or also an intertextual theological function. Second, the translator should preserve the pragmatic action of the utterance. Third, the lexical solution should retain the source's marked religious identity whenever this identity contributes to characterization or allegory. Fourth, rhetorical features such as repetition or ambiguity should be reproduced when feasible. Fifth, paratext should be used sparingly for meanings that no readable English expression can carry. This sequence avoids both unrestricted domestication and mechanical literalism.

7. Suggested Alternative Renderings

The proposed alternatives in Table 3 are not presented as definitive replacements. Literary translation always involves rhythm, characterization, and the surrounding sentence, and a solution that works in an analytical table may require adjustment in a complete edition. The alternatives illustrate how selective foreignization can preserve additional functions without producing incomprehensible English.

For الحمد لله, "Praise be to God" retains a conventional Islamic formula recognizable to many English readers. For العفو, "pardon" differentiates the term from mercy and tolerance. For الجبار, no unassisted single-word solution is sufficient; "almighty tyrant" deliberately preserves the collision between divine and political language, preferably supported by an endnote. For الأمر لصاحب الأمر,

"The matter belongs to the Master of all matters" preserves repetition, theological authority, and the resignative tone, though its marked syntax should be tested against the character's established voice.

The broader principle is that translation should preserve the source text's interpretive invitations. Mahfouz does not explain every religious resonance to the Arabic reader; many remain implicit. The English translation should not turn the novel into a theological commentary. It should, however, leave enough verbal evidence for the target reader to perceive that the dialogue is operating on more than one level. A carefully marked phrase can perform that function more effectively than extensive explanation.

Table 3. Suggested selective-foreignizing alternatives

Source item	Suggested rendering	Rationale
الحمد لله	Praise be to God	Preserves praise formula and religious markedness
العفو	pardon	Retains denotative distinction from mercy and tolerance
الجبار	almighty tyrant*	Signals divine/political double meaning; endnote recommended
الأمر لصاحب الأمر	The matter belongs to the Master of all matters	Preserves repetition, authority, and resignation

* A concise endnote should explain the divine-name resonance of al-Jabbar.

8. Conclusion

This article has examined four Islamic theological references in two English translations of Naguib Mahfouz's Awlad Haretna. Using Newmark's procedures and Venuti's domestication-foreignization framework, it has shown that both Philip Stewart and Peter Theroux

generally preserve surface meaning while reducing elements of theological intertextuality, rhetorical structure, or allegorical function. The translations are not characterized by wholesale omission of religion. Rather, they frequently convert specifically Islamic verbal forms into generic English religious, moral, or political language.

Theroux tends to prioritize idiomatic clarity and pragmatic effect. Stewart occasionally retains a more explicit religious register but sometimes alters denotation or speech function in doing so. The greatest cultural loss occurs in الجبارbecause both "oppressor" and "tyrant" remove the source term's simultaneous association with coercive human authority and a divine name. الحمد للهand الأمر لصاحب الأمرdemonstrate a recurring trade-off between conversational function and formulaic theological identity, while العفوshows how a translation can gain target-language religiosity yet lose conceptual precision.

The findings confirm that cultural loss is multidimensional. It should be evaluated through denotation, intertextuality, pragmatics, rhetoric, and allegory rather than through literal similarity alone. The study recommends selective foreignization: preserve a culturally marked formula where it carries literary function, reproduce repetition or ambiguity where possible, and use concise paratext only for irreducible theological double meanings. Such an approach can maintain readability while resisting the systematic secularization of the source text's verbal world.

Because the study analyzes a small focused subcorpus, its conclusions should be tested against the full novel and through reader-

response research. Future work could compare how Muslim and non-Muslim English readers interpret alternative renderings, examine the later revised edition of Stewart's translation, and measure whether theological markers affect recognition of the novel's allegorical structure. Even within its limited corpus, however, the analysis demonstrates that the translation of religious language is not a peripheral lexical issue. In Awlad Haretna, it is central to the representation of culture, authority, and the relationship between the human and the divine.

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