

## Beyond the Text: Comparative Analysis of Paratextual Elements in the Arabic Translations of Toni Morrison's *Paradise*

**Abdelkrim Chirig**

*Applied Language and Culture Studies, Chouaib Doukkali University, El Jadida, Morocco*  
[chirigabdelkrim@gmail.com](mailto:chirigabdelkrim@gmail.com)

**Karima Bouziane**

*Chouaib Doukkali University, El Jadida, Morocco & CEOS.PP, ISCAP, Polytechnic of Porto, Portugal*

**Marouane Zakhir**

*Chouaib Doukkali University, El Jadida, Morocco*

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**Abstract**

*This study investigates the paratextual elements in the Arabic translations of Toni Morrison's Paradise, focusing on the translations by Tawfiq Al-Asadi and Ali Basha. Paratextual elements, including introductions, book covers, titles, forewords, and footnotes, play a crucial role in shaping reader reception and interpretation, particularly in translated literary works. This study aims to analyze how these elements influence the reception and interpretation of the novel within the Arabic-speaking world. Through a comparison of the visual and semantic interfaces between the source text (ST) and the target texts (TTs), this research reveals how paratextual elements are adapted or transformed to suit the cultural context of the target audience. The analysis encompasses book covers, title translations, forewords, dedications, and footnotes, highlighting the impact of these elements on reader engagement and understanding. The findings suggest that the translators' choices reflect their cultural, ideological, and gendered perspectives, influencing their interpretative strategies and the final reception of the translated text. These paratextual elements highlight literary translation's obstacles and translators' active participation in crossing cultural and linguistic boundaries.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In literary translation, paratexts function much like packaging, initially concealing the main text and then gradually revealing its contents (Pellatt, 2014). These paratextual elements, such as introductions, notes, dedications, prefaces, forewords, figures, book covers, pictures, epigraphs, and blurbs (Genette, 1997), play a crucial role in shaping how readers interpret the text. They bridge the gap between the publishing industry and the literary world, influencing readers' interpretations and guiding their reading experience (Genette, 1997).

Paratextual elements are particularly significant in translation, as they accompany most translated works to assist, entice, and guide readers (Dovhanchyna, 2021; Meifang, 2012; Watts, 2000). They reflect the translator's or institution's stance and values, thus impacting how the text is understood and received (Summers, 2017). By providing context, background information, and cultural insights, paratextual elements enhance the reader's understanding and

engagement with the text, especially in literature. For instance, book covers and blurbs play a practical and marketing role by offering a preview of the content and tone, thereby attracting potential readers (Tychinina, 2017). Prefaces and forewords prepare readers for the main text by offering context and background information, while dedications and acknowledgments enrich the reading experience by providing insights into the influences behind the work. In translation, paratextual elements help bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, offering explanations that facilitate comprehension (Alblooshi, 2021; Põldsaar, 2010). They ensure that the original work's integrity and meaning are preserved for a new audience. The choices made in paratextual elements reflect the translator's interpretation, highlighting the dynamic interplay between the original text and its translation (Haroon, 2017). Overall, paratextual elements enhance and influence the reading experience by shaping how texts are presented and perceived. They contribute significantly to the impact and reception of literary works, particularly in the context of literary translation, where they help maintain the balance between fidelity to the original and accessibility for the Arab audience.

### **1.1. Research Aims**

The primary aim of this research is to conduct a paratextual analysis of the Arabic translations of Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, focusing on the work translated by Tawfiq Al-Asadi and Ali Basha. This study seeks to analyze the elements surrounding the Arabic translations, such as book covers, title translations, forewords, dedications, and footnotes, to highlight how these paratextual elements influence reader reception and interpretation in the target culture. It will compare the visual and semantic interfaces between the ST and the TTs, revealing how these elements are adapted or transformed in translation to suit the cultural context of the target audience.

The research seeks to contribute to the wider discourse on translation studies by providing insights into the complexities of literary translation, especially in the context of Arabic literary translation. This includes understanding the active role of translators in navigating cultural and linguistic boundaries. Furthermore, the study aims to explore the ideological, gender, and cultural positions of the translators and how these influence their interpretative choices, impacting the final translated text and its reception.

The following research questions were formulated:

- How do the paratextual elements in the Arabic translations of *Paradise* by Tawfiq Al-Asadi and Ali Basha differ from the ST?
- In what ways do the translators' choices regarding paratextual elements reflect their cultural, ideological, and gendered perspectives?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Paratextual Elements in Translation**

First, the book cover is a significant aspect of connecting with readers (Gudinavičius & Šuminas, 2017). Dixon et al. (2015) study if book covers could hint at sub-genre content. Beyond covers, there are many paratextual elements that support the primary text. When a book is translated and published in a new cultural setting, it raises the question of whether the cover accurately represents the ST. Before analyzing the linguistic elements of covers, it is essential to scrutinize the implied connotations of the chosen themes or designs for all the books under study. Scholars emphasize the crucial function of book covers as symbolic and cultural representations, which reflect the text, author, illustrator, publisher, reader, and the broader societal and cultural context, especially in popular and highly regarded literary works (O'Connell, 2010). According to Söderlund and Rosengren (2008), a book cover serves as a promotional tool and a protective covering. It can offer insights into the book's content, enabling readers to form expectations about the story and their emotional responses.

Additionally, Schmidt-Stölting et al. (2011) note that readers expect a cover to indicate the quality of the story. Whether visually appealing or not, it affects the reader's perception of the work's artistic value (Horsky & Honea, 2009). The cover plays a crucial role in attracting attention and engaging the reader with the text (O'Connell, 2010). Genette (1997) suggests that it combines visual and symbolic elements to convey meaning. However, designing a culturally pertinent and captivating cover may result in illustrations deviating from the actual content they are meant to depict. The presence of an image or figure on a cover often reflects deeply ingrained cultural norms and the artist's perception of an idealized existence (Bordo, 2004).

Secondly, Nord (2004) highlights that while much research has focused on examining titles in their original form, the translation of titles has been less emphasized. The cultural turn in translation studies brought about a change, making title translation a prominent subject of scholarly investigation (Doyle, 1989). Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey (2013) argue that title translation is a complex endeavor driven by purpose, requiring negotiation between various participants in the translation process. Title translation, like other forms of translation, strives to honor stakeholders' intentions while ensuring functional adequacy within a specific communicative context (Nord, 1993). However, translating novel titles presents a distinct challenge due to the importance of equivalence. Nida and Taber (2003) argue that translators should not necessarily emphasize equivalence over identity. Given the target audience's familiarity with original titles through online research, novel titles typically maintain some relationship to their original equivalence (Newmark, 1988). Memorable, allusive, and reminiscent titles tend to attract a wider readership, eliciting potent emotional responses (Viole, 2011). Cognitive processing involves not only comprehending the denotative meaning of words but also the emotional response they elicit. The connotative meaning of words is based on their emotional impact (Nida & Taber, 2003). Translators may feel obligated to reproduce linguistic structures of languages they deem more prestigious, resulting in *translationese* titles (Newmark, 1991). Strategies for translating fictional titles range from literal translations to creating entirely new target titles with no resemblance to the source language counterparts (Viezzi et al., 2011). Multiple titles for a single fictional work in the same language may stem from intralingual translation rather than just translation.

Thirdly, the foreword in literary translation serves as an important paratextual element that provides context, establishes a framework, and prepares readers for the translated work. It helps situate the translation within a specific framework by offering historical, cultural, or thematic context, thus enhancing the reader's understanding (Rapoport, 1989). Forewords can also address the materiality of the book, emphasizing the physical and textual elements that influence its interpretation and connect the source and target cultures (Bachmann & Heimgartner, 2017). They convey the author's intent, background, and specific conditions under which the translation was produced, offering insights into the translator's choices and the text's significance (Tychinina, 2017). Additionally, forewords discuss the challenges of translating across cultures and languages, highlighting strategies like domestication and foreignization, and their role in bridging cultural gaps (Radetič, 2019). They engage with broader literary and translation theories, situating the translated work within ongoing academic discussions and providing a critical lens for assessing the translation (Burnett, 2007). Overall, forewords enhance the reader's understanding and appreciation of the translated work by offering essential context, explanations, and critical insights.

Last but not least, although the process of footnoting is generally considered an integral part of foreword and preface, it would be helpful to distinguish the two for purposes of clarity. The translator's footnotes serve the same purpose as the introduction: they are meant to draw attention to and explain any linguistic concerns that arise throughout the translation process (Flotow, 2019). Furthermore, footnotes, which serve as paratextual components situated at the

lowermost part of a page within a text, is extremely useful within translated works of literature as translators make use of them to provide additional contextual information or explanatory annotations, thereby aiding readers in comprehending the intricacies and subtleties inherent in the process of translation (Haroon, 2019). In addition, when supplementary material of cultural, technical, or linguistic character is required in a translation, notes can be included in the form of in-text comments, footnotes, endnotes, or glossary entries (Newmark, 1988). In the realm of Bible translation, footnotes serve a dual purpose of rectifying linguistic and cultural discrepancies and providing additional information for a better understanding of the historical and cultural context, particularly when a literal translation approach is employed (Nida, 1964). However, other studies have claimed that footnotes are just marginal elements. For instance, since footnotes appear in a separate section of the text (the footer), Mahmud and Bayusena (2022) argue, they are of lower importance. This signifies that footnoting is merely a supplementary component of a written work. When readers are made aware that this material is being omitted, they have the option to go on without being hampered by a lack of crucial context.

**3. METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a comparative analysis methodology to examine the paratextual elements in the Arabic translations of Morrison’s *Paradise* by Tawfiq Al-Asadi and Ali Basha. The research focuses on book covers, title translations, forewords, dedications, and footnotes, comparing these elements between the ST and TTs to reveal how they are adapted to suit the cultural context of the target audience. The specific paratextual elements analyzed include visual and design features of book covers, semantic and cultural implications of title translations, content and contributions of forewords, alignment of dedications with the ST’s themes, and the role of footnotes in explaining cultural, historical, or linguistic elements.

The analysis includes a qualitative approach. This involves thematic analysis to understand how paratextual elements frame the narrative and contextual analysis to interpret the translators' cultural, ideological, and gendered perspectives. The comparative framework helps systematically compare paratextual elements across the different Arabic versions of *Paradise*. Steps in the analysis include identifying and documenting paratextual elements, comparing thematic content, contextualizing differences, and assessing their impact on reader reception. As a result, analyzing these paratextual elements will enable us to understand how they come out to the reader and the framework within which they are.

**4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**4.1. Book Covers and Title Translations: ST and TTs**

<b>ST paratextual information</b>	
<b>Author</b>	Toni Morrison
<b>Origin</b>	African-American
<b>Title</b>	<i>Paradise</i>
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Number of pages</b>	318 pages
<b>Publishing information</b>	Alfred A. Knopf Inc., New York, 1998

Table 1

TT1 paratextual information		TT2 paratextual information	
<b>Translator1</b>	توفيق الأسدي (Tawfiq Al-Asadi)	<b>Translator2</b>	علي باشا (Ali Basha)
<b>Origin</b>	Lebanese	<b>Origin</b>	Unknown
<b>Title</b>	الفردوس	<b>Title</b>	فردوس
<b>Language</b>	Arabic	<b>Language</b>	Arabic
<b>Number of pages</b>	461 pages	<b>Number of pages</b>	416 pages
<b>Publishing information</b>	دار المدى، سوريا – دمشق، 1999 Al-mada publishing house, Syria – Damascus, 1999	<b>Publishing information</b>	دار ورد، سورية <sup>1</sup> – دمشق، 1999 Ward publishing house, Syria – Damascus, 1999

Table 2

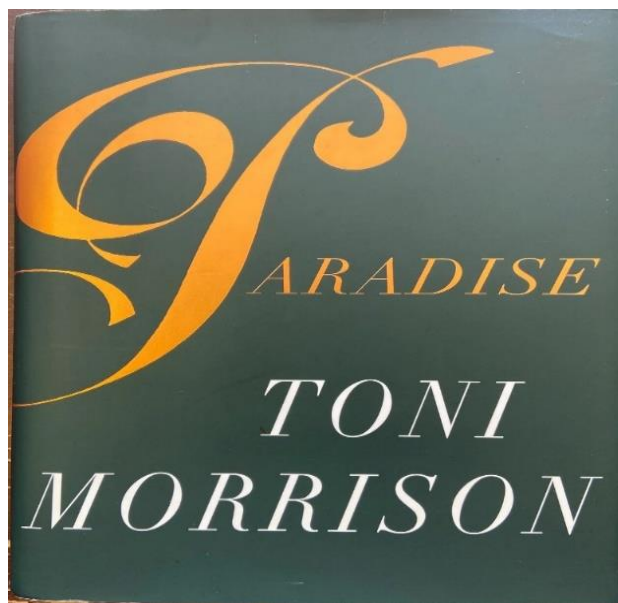


Figure 1 (a)

<sup>1</sup> The word 'سورية' is presented as it appears on the copyright page; thus, it can be inferred that the case in question is not a result of a typographical error by the authors of this article

The original English version (ST) (Table 1) was published by Alfred A. Knopf in New York, 1998, with 318 pages. It is noted that Toni Morrison is an African-American female author. In Table 2, the first Arabic translation (TT1) by Tawfiq Al-Asadi; it contains 461 pages and was published by Al-Mada Publishing House, also in Damascus, Syria, in 1999. The translator is of Lebanese origin. For the second Arabic translation (TT2), the translator is Ali Basha; it has 416 pages and was published by Ward Publishing House in Damascus, Syria, in 1999. The discrepancy in page numbers between the original and its Arabic translations, however, could be due to differences in language structure, typesetting, and formatting. It is also interesting to note the increase in page numbers from the original to the translations, which is common due to the expansion that often occurs when translating from English to Arabic (Kwintessential, 2022). Moreover, the growth in word count between the STs and TTs should accommodate communicative effectiveness, taking into account the audience's characteristics (Saulé & Aisulu, 2014). The presence of two translations in the same year suggests a significant interest in Morrison's work in the Arab-speaking world at that time.

Starting with the original cover of *Paradise* by Toni Morrison (Figure 1 (a)), the design is minimalistic, featuring a large, ornate 'P' that dominates the space. The color scheme is simple yet bold, with the combination of orange and green suggesting vibrancy and growth. From a feminist perspective, the title '*Paradise*' and the absence of any gendered imagery on the cover can be seen as an assertion of universality. But of course, Morrison's work often discusses themes related to identity and community, particularly in the context of African American women's experiences. Thus, the minimalist cover could be perceived as an invitation to all readers, regardless of gender, to engage with the complex narratives within.

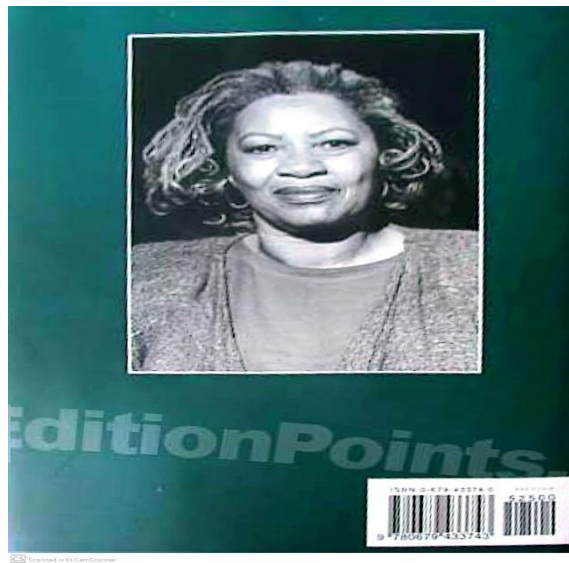
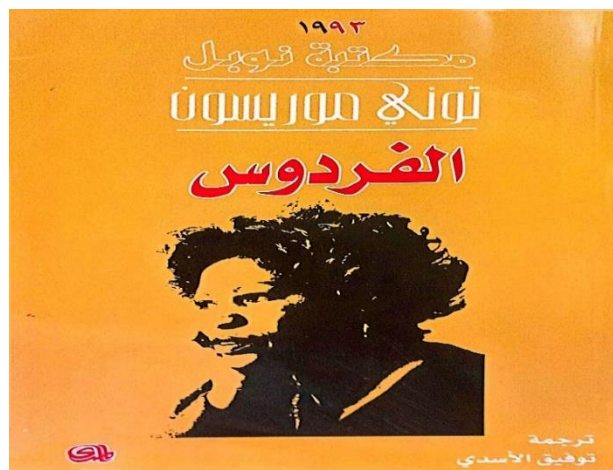


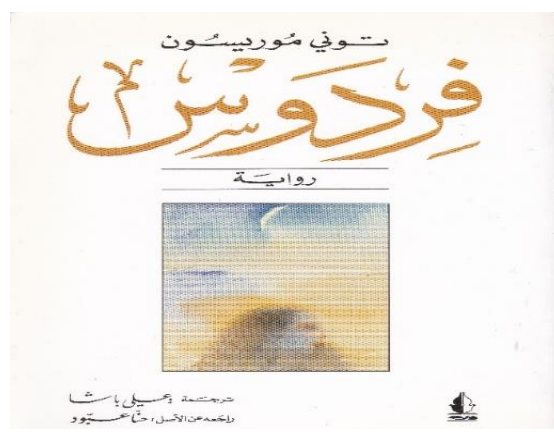
Figure 1 (b)

Nonetheless, if we look at the back of the novel (Figure 1 (b)), the design is now simpler, using a basic background with a photo of Toni Morrison. It is a straightforward approach that puts the author at the center, possibly indicating the cultural value of authorial identity in the text's interpretation. This can also emphasize Morrison's presence and authority as a female African-American author.



**Figure 2**

As concerns TT1, the cover with Morrison's silhouette (Figure 2) is a powerful statement. The use of her image is an indication of her identity as a black woman and as an author, possibly signaling the book's engagement with themes of race, gender, and identity. Furthermore, this cover can also be interpreted as a celebration of Morrison's reputation and her role in elevating black women's voices in literature. Another point is that featuring Morrison herself might culturally serve to bridge the gap between the author's context and the readers', signifying respect for her as a literary figure and possibly inviting readers to consider the author's own cultural and social standings.



**Figure 3**

In TT2, the cover (Figure 3) prominently displays a portrait of a female person in profile, set against a tranquil backdrop. The introspective stare of the woman and her soft, undefined features may symbolize the intricate inner worlds of the female characters in *Paradise*, aligning with Morrison's emphasis on complicated and various character portrayals. The feminist perspective in this context may be characterized by the prioritization of the feminine element, perhaps appealing to readers with an interest in the examination of women's experiences, a recurring motif throughout Morrison's literary oeuvre. Also, the use of a painting rather than a photograph might resonate with regional artistic traditions, suggesting a melding of Morrison's narrative with aesthetic sensibilities.

When it comes to the translations of the title "Paradise", we can notice a very interesting fact. As regards the ST, the English title can be interpreted in two different ways. On the one hand, it seems to be straightforward, presenting the concept of "Paradise" in a universal manner without any definite articles, thus leaving the interpretation open to the reader. The term "Paradise" carries connotations of an ideal, utopian space which can be both a physical location

and a state of mind or being. Given Morrison's themes, this could refer to the historical and emotional aspirations of African-Americans for a safe, nurturing, and respectful community, free from the racial tensions of American society. On the other hand, from a Biblical perspective, Paradise is a reference to Heaven or a celestial Paradise (MacDonald, 1966). It can also mean different things to different people; that is, the Garden of Eden is a primary symbol of the Kingdom of God and Heaven, as well as the holy place where good people wait for their resurrection and entrance into the celestial world of ultimate splendour (Leclercq, 1924). Benjamins argues that the Christian concept of Paradise is typically discussed in relation to either baptism, which signifies the beginning of one's journey as a Christian, or to acts of martyrdom, or monastic existence, which is regarded as the highest expressions of Christianity (1999).

Overall, the term leads to several interpretations: a reflection on social structures, a personal quest for inner peace, a spiritual journey for transcendence, and a historical yearning for a place of peace. Also, looking at the title through a Biblical lens adds layers of religious significance. Depending on the reader's upbringing, worldview, and life experiences, Morrison's novel here may take on a variety of interpretations.

In TT1 by Tawfiq Al-Asadi, the title is "الفردوس," which includes the definite article "ال" [al], hypothetically translating to "The Paradise". This translation specifies and defines the concept of paradise, pointing to a particular, perhaps particular understanding of the term. To explain, in cultural contexts where Arabic is spoken, especially within the Islamic tradition, "الفردوس" or "Al-Firdaus" is often associated with the highest level of Heaven, thus this translation could evoke specific religious imagery and connotations of an ultimate, divine Paradise known as "الفردوس الأعلى". However, in TT2 by Ali Basha, the title here is translated as "فردوس," which is the Arabic word for "paradise" without the definite article "ال" [al]. This translation presents a universal, open-ended concept of paradise, because the lack of the definite article in Arabic suggests a non-specific, potentially more inclusive idea of paradise that is not confined to a single interpretation; That is, the title here invites readers to consider their own ideas of paradise, which could vary widely based on personal experiences and cultural backgrounds.

The observation we can draw here is that the translators' choices might reflect a sensitivity to the cultural and religious contexts of their anticipated readership. While Al-Asadi's use of the definite article in TT1 may resonate more deeply with readers in a predominantly Muslim context, where "Al Firdaus" has strong religious undertones, Ali Basha's TT2 leaves the concept culturally and spiritually open. The choice between "فردوس" and "الفردوس" also carries philosophical and theological implications. "فردوس" can be seen as a state of mind or a condition of being, which aligns with existential notions of creating one's own paradise or hell on earth. In contrast, "الفردوس" implies an established, perhaps divinely ordained paradise, which may align more closely with traditional religious teachings about the afterlife.

The inclusion of "راجعہ عن الأصل: حنّا عبّود" on the book cover (Figure 3) indicates that Hanna Abboud played a significant role in the translation process of Morrison's *Paradise* into Arabic. His contribution would have involved ensuring that, for instance, the idiomatic expressions and cultural references of the ST were accurately and appropriately rendered in Arabic. It is worth noting that Hanna Abboud has many accomplishments in his professional life, such as being an educator, magazine editor, and member of the Arab Writers Union's Literary Criticism Society (Baderkhan, 2019). He has also written extensively on philosophical and political philosophy, literary economics, and translations of criticism and literary theory, and is notably well-known for his literary critique of poetry (Omar, 2016).



Abboud's review process might also involve addressing the challenges of translating Morrison's specific literary style, which is known for its complexity, lyrical quality, and depth of meaning. Given Morrison's exploration of themes related to African American history, identity, and community, the reviewer's task would have been to convey these themes in a way that resonates with Arabic-speaking readers while retaining the power and intent of the ST.

The reviewer would have to be mindful of the socio-political and historical contexts of the Arabic-speaking world, interpreting Morrison's feminist and cultural themes in a way that is relevant and respectful to the new audience. This can be especially delicate when dealing with texts that touch on race, gender, and social justice, as these topics can have very different connotations and histories in different cultures. This role is particularly important in feminist literature, as it often challenges prevailing norms and values. A reviewer like Abboud would need to navigate these issues carefully, ensuring that the translation does not dilute the strength of the feminist message, while also making it accessible and impactful within the cultural framework of the readers.

The absence of a reviewer's name on the other Arabic translation (TT1) suggests a different approach to the translation process. While Abboud's name carries recognition and perhaps a certain guarantee of quality due to his established reputation, the Al-Assadi translation may rely solely on the translator's own proficiency and interpretation without an external review. This can be indicative of different publishing practices or decisions made based on the translator's reputation, the intended audience, or the publisher's resources. Another important factor is that Hanna Abboud being more widely known than Ali Basha, the translator of the other version, might also influence the reader's choice. Accordingly, a well-known reviewer or translator can be a decisive factor for readers familiar with translation quality issues, as they may associate Abboud's involvement with a certain level of fidelity and literary value in the translation.

#### 4.2. Peripheral Elements



Figure 4: A copyright page in Ali Basha's version (TT2)

The inclusion of Dr. Ahmed Maala as the cover artist and Dr. Majd Haydar for technical supervision on the second page of the Ali Basha's translation (TT2) of Morrison's *Paradise* adds layers of cultural and intellectual depth to this edition. Dr. Maala, being a Syrian

distinguished artist, suggests that the cover art is not just an afterthought but a deliberate choice, potentially infusing the cover with symbolic meaning or aesthetic value that resonates with the themes of the novel. The cover art by a renowned artist can serve as a visual interpretation of the novel's themes and offer an immediate emotional connection or response even before the reader turns the first page. We have to recall that one function of artwork on a book cover is to provide visual context for the text inside (Landes, 1985). Moreover, the book's cover is frequently the initial point of contact between the reader and the book, and as such, it is highly influential, as it initiates a dialogue with the reader, painting a picture of the book's contents (Iwana et al., 2016). The fact that Dr. Majd Haydar was brought in to provide technical supervision shows how seriously this translation project was taken. One aspect of technical supervision is making sure the language is correct, the terminology is consistent, and the translation is of high quality. When translating a literature as dense and culturally significant as *Paradise*, in which not only language but also cultural transposition is necessary, this function takes on added relevance. These roles point to a team effort in which several areas of knowledge were pooled to produce a translation of the novel that is faithful to the original text linguistically and culturally. And as a publishing strategy, including the names of such prominent academics may help lend the work more authority and win over a more knowledgeable readership. The use of these names suggests a sophisticated understanding of the novel's numerous aspects and the difficulty of its translation. A cultural artifact embodying a dialogue between Morrison's vision and the cultural surroundings of the Arabic-speaking world, this edition of *Paradise* aspires to be more than just a translated text, as this quote shows.

Another important observation is the notation "الاستشارة الأدبية: حيدر حيدر" on the second page of TT2 cover (Figure 4), which translates to "Literary Consultation: Haydar Haydar". This notation indicates an interesting aspect of the translation process. We can deduce that there seems to be a collaborative effort in translating Morrison's *Paradise*, since including a literary consultant, in this case, Haydar Haydar, suggests that the translation process was collaborative. We should bear in mind that literary consultants are often tasked with providing expert advice, ensuring the translation maintains the tone and literary quality of the original work. Another thing is that literary consultants adapt a work to fit the cultural and linguistic context of the TL. Thus, Haydar's contribution might have been essential in ensuring that the translation resonates with the intended audience while staying faithful to the ST. Moreover, Haydar's guidance would have been valuable in reviewing the translation for accuracy, fluency, and literary merit, contributing to a high-quality final product.

The absence of a literary consultant in TT1 could be due to budget constraints. Hiring a consultant adds costs, and with limited funds, the translator or publishing house might choose to proceed without one. Independent Al-Assadi may have preferred an autonomous approach, confident in capturing Morrison's work without external support. This decision might reflect a cost-effective publishing strategy, minimizing consulting fees. TT2's translator might have relied solely on his interpretation to align with his reading of Morrison's novel.

### 4.3. Foreword

While TT2 includes an extensive foreword by Alexander Habash that contextualizes Morrison's work within the broader tapestry of African American experiences and literary criticism, TT1 presents the narrative without such a framework. Such contrasts open questions not only regarding the intent of the translators but also about the influence such paratextual elements might have on a reader's relation to the novel. The absence of a foreword in TT1 could suggest various editorial choices—perhaps a desire for immediacy or an assumption of the reader's interpretative independence. The place of a foreword in TT2, on the other hand, may deepen the understanding of the reader through the clear affiliation of the novel's themes to Morrison's biography and from there to greater social concerns.

In TT2, the five-page-long foreword entitled “الفردوس وأوهام الأرض الموعودة” "Paradise and the Illusions of the Promised Land" by Alexander Habash serves as an insightful and comprehensive analysis of Morrison's literary achievements, especially her novel *Paradise*. It starts by highlighting Morrison's illustrious writing career and Nobel Prize triumph. This brief introductory paragraph already hints at the profound awe and affection that the foreword has for Morrison's writing. The foreword explores then how her works are deeply embedded in the African American experience. It discusses the historical and contemporary issues addressed in her writing, particularly focusing on themes like the legacy of slavery, racial and gender identity, and the pursuit of dignity. The stylistic analysis of Morrison's work is a key element of the foreword. It not only praises her storytelling abilities but also critically examines her writing style. Of course, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the language she uses is characterized by a blend of moral depth and the rhythm of blues music. Furthermore, the foreword places Morrison's work within a broader socio-cultural context; that is, discusses the American dream, the challenges of racial integration, and the pursuit of an idealized 'paradise,' highlighting the contradictions and challenges integral in these concepts. The foreword also notes the division among critics and readers regarding her novels, while also mentioning the commercial success and cultural impact of her writing, particularly the adaptation of *Beloved* into a film and the acclaim surrounding *Paradise*. Additionally, it raises philosophical and ethical considerations, prompting readers to think about the nature of utopian ideals, the concept of evil, and the human quest for a perfect society. Last but not least, it incorporates personal and biographical elements of Morrison's life, connecting her personal experiences and journey to her writing. At the end of his foreword, he makes an intriguing claim that illuminates the novel's allegedly paradoxical viewpoint. In other words, he argues “Where is Paradise in all this? It exists only in words, as Morrison's words dance wonderfully, burning like black suns. It is a crosscut hymn, echoing with the sounds of flesh and blood, and of raped girls drenched in sweat and blood” (Morrison, 1999, p. 9) (our translation).

Nonetheless, TT1 does include neither a preface nor a foreword that could strengthen the credibility of Al-Assadi translation as Kelly (1984) provides a comprehensive explanation on the fundamental importance of translation foreword/prefaces in enhancing the reader's understanding and appreciation of a translated literary work. It is worth mentioning that in a translated work, there may exist multiple forewords, some of which are translated, while others were written specifically for the translation by the publisher, translator, or another relevant party (Alvstad, 2014); the latter is germane to our case in TT2.

The absence of such an element (foreword) in TT1 might be due to many factors. For instance, some translators often have the discretion to add or omit elements like forewords based on their understanding of the target audience's needs. Taoufik Al-Assadi might have chosen to stay closer to the ST, omitting any additional commentary or analysis in the form of a foreword. It might also be related to a certain editorial policy because publishers play a crucial role in determining the final content of a book. This absence here could be an editorial decision, possibly made to keep the translation more concise, to focus solely on Morrison's story, or because they felt a foreword was unnecessary for Arab readers. Moreover, respecting the original work might be another factor for the exclusion of forewords; that is, some translators prioritize maintaining the truthfulness of the ST's structure and content. Al-Assadi might have decided against adding a foreword to preserve the original format of Morrison's novel, offering us, as Arab readers, an experience closer to reading the original text. A last explanation might be due to the difference in editions. It is possible that Al-Assadi (TT1) and Basha (TT2) worked from different editions of Morrison's work. If Al-Assadi's (TT1) did not include a foreword, he might have chosen not to add one, whereas Basha, specifically the agent responsible for writing the foreword in (TT2), might have worked with an edition that included a foreword or felt compelled to add one independently.

One would be honest to say that the foreword by Alexander Habash in TT2 "Paradise and the Illusions of the Promised Land" pays equal homage to its subject, Morrison's *Paradise*, as does TT1, but to a much more perhaps overly apparent degree. He critically appreciates Morrison as a writer who delves into the African American experience, the legacy of slavery, and the quest for identity in his reflective introduction, which lauds Morrison's literary skill. With Habash's insights, one on Morrison's style, themes, and socio-cultural significance really gets a richer understanding of the work she does and the importance of forewords in bringing the reader closer to the translated literature. However, all that TT1 really lacks is some kind of foreword reaching out to the reader and establishing the bond that will be necessary over the duration of the book, an indicator of just how important such opening sections can be in a translation. Herein is where Habash's Foreword in TT2 enriches the value-added reading experience and gives a worthy analysis of the allusions between Morrison's narrative and more expansive literary and cultural discourses.

#### 4.4. Footnotes

As discussed previously, one solution to the challenge of translating uncommon words like proper names, cultural concepts, and specialized terms is to include contextual comments in the form of footnotes. Newmark (1988) provides support for the idea that most words and terms that are footnoted have cultural, technical, and linguistic significance. Also, footnotes are the only place in a translation where the translator's voice may be heard clearly (Kinnunen & Koskinen, 2010). This can also be applicable to literary translations. Thus, according to Ortiz (2015), translators' usage of footnotes varies, largely based on each translator's assessment of the informational needs of his or her target audience. It is worth noting that there are situations when neither the origin nor the author of these footnotes can be determined; that is, Alvstad argues that it is not always obvious if a footnote is part of the fictional text or was inserted by an actual translator or editor because they can appear very similar (2014).

As regards our analysis here, the discrepancy in the number of footnotes between Al-Assadi's translation (TT1) and Basha's translation (TT2) could reflect distinct translation philosophies and approaches to the role of a translator. Al-Assadi's approach, with only one footnote, suggests a preference for a seamless reading experience, possibly integrating necessary explanations within the text itself. Nevertheless, these short explanations embedded in the text were not enough, which might reflect an assumption that the readers have a certain level of cultural or contextual understanding. This minimal use of footnotes may aim to keep the reader immersed in the narrative without frequent *disruptions* for explanatory asides. Critics believe that translators should remain unseen, preserving the author's voice without interference (Sztorc, 2020); thus, footnotes that introduce the translator's comments deviate from this principle by making their presence known, contrary to the ideal of minimal intrusion (Henry, 2000).

However, Basha's translation, which includes over 34 footnotes, seems to take a different approach, which is in a way positive and which recognizes the value of footnotes in translation and praises the translator's knowledge (Sztorc, 2020). Providing the reader with comprehensive cultural, historical, or linguistic factors that are not readily translatable inside the text may be an attempt at transparency in the translation process. It seems that Basha takes on a more *instructive* role, pointing out the many ways in which the TC differs from the one from which it was translated. In addition, Basha's frequent use of footnotes to explain terms, phrases, and references that might not have direct parallels in the TL or TC may reflect a dedication to preserving the integrity of the ST. This might be considered as an effort to overcome cultural differences while keeping the richness of the original. In contrast, Al-Assadi's sparing use of footnotes could imply a translation strategy that leans towards adaptation, making the text more accessible to the target audience by reducing the need for extratextual explanation and allowing

the narrative to stand on its own within the new cultural context. This holds significance as it is imperative to ascertain the circumstances and cases in which footnotes were omitted (Paloposki & Koskinen, 2010). Differences in footnote use may also indicate editing decisions or the assumed level of familiarity among the target audience with the subject matter. Basha's approach may be aimed at readers who are interested in going deeper into the cultural and thematic complexity of the source material than Al-Assadi is, who may be writing for a more general audience.

All in all, the use of footnotes in translation, particularly for uncommon words like proper names, cultural concepts, and specialized terms, varies among translators. Newmark (1988) and Ortiz (2015) suggest that footnotes often address cultural, technical, and linguistic elements and reflect the translator's voice. This strategy can differ greatly, as seen in Al-Assadi's minimal use of footnotes in TT1, suggesting a seamless reading experience and cultural understanding by the reader, versus Basha's extensive use of over 34 footnotes in TT2, indicating a more instructive approach aimed at preserving the original's integrity and explaining cultural differences.

Dedication (ST)	Dedication (TT1)	Dedication (TT2)
For many are the pleasant forms which exist in numerous sins, and incontinencies, and disgraceful passions, and fleeting pleasures, which (men) embrace until they become sober and go up to their resting place. And they will find me there, and they will live, and they will not die again.	للكثيرين هي الأشكال السارة التي توجد في خطابيا وعلمات وعواطف شائنة ومسرات متلاشبية كثيرة والتي يفتنهما (الرجال) حتى يصبحوا صاحين ويصعدوا إلى مكان راحتهم. وسيجدونني هناك وسيعيشون ولن يموتوا ثانية.	لأنها كثيرة أشكال المذات التي توجد في الخطايا العديدة، والشهوات الجنسية، والأهواء الدنيئة، والمذات العابرة، التي يتعاطاها (الرجال) قبل أن يصبحوا حكماء ويرتفعوا إلى مكان راحتهم الأبدية وهناك سوف يجدونني وسوف يعيشون، ولن يموتوا أبداً.

**Table 3**

#### 4.5. Dedications

Credibility can be established by dedications and acknowledgements, especially when the translator expresses gratitude (as in "My thanks to...") and provides a general greeting (as in "To all..."). The dedications in the Arabic versions of *Paradise* are actually translations of Morrison's dedication, which she derived, without reference, from *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* in the *Nag Hammadi Scriptures*. It is important to remember that these dedications are not signed (Alvstad, 2014).

The ST (Table 3) has a *dedication* that is based on the text or poem-like text entitled *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* from the *Nag Hammadi Scriptures*. This is a profound introduction to the novel's themes of transcendence. The passage talks about the allure of vices that last only a short time, but it revolves around an awakening where these vices are given up in favor of a spiritual ascent to a final, peaceful home (Taussig et al., 2015). It sounds like a process of purification or enlightenment in which staying away from worldly concerns leads to a higher existential state (Barnstone & Meyer, 2009). This journey towards a "resting place" aligns with the *Gnostic* pursuit of spiritual truth, where understanding and connecting with the divine is an act of liberation from earthly bonds. In Morrison's novel, this could mirror the characters' quest for a haven that transcends the tangible; that is, a paradise not just as a place but as a state of being. Morrison might further emphasize her themes of female agency and the strength of the oppressed by including a work that is narrated from the viewpoint of a divine feminine presence. A final promise of eternal life in a world without death mirrors the hopes for a life

beyond this world's pain and difficulties, showing a desire for permanent harmony and completeness. Her use of this rare, mysterious text from the Nag Hammadi collection seems to be posing the question, "What is the essence of paradise?" as regards the relationship between this material world and the spiritual realm. It all builds up to a story full of spiritual symbolism, which mirrors the complicated, sometimes painful, but ultimately optimistic quest for wisdom and redemption.

The language used in *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* fits well with modern ideas about gender, questioning traditional gender roles and the power structures behind them, as it shows that questioning authority and the way we use language is not just a modern idea (Till, 1994). People have always had power and found ways to challenge it in the context of their times and cultures. What is interesting is that *this* poem does not just question gender roles; it also questions religious beliefs. The voice in the text uses a style that's usually reserved for describing gods, but it talks about more human qualities and even says at one point that it is "without God," which seems to make fun of traditional religious ideas (Fiorenza, 1994). This approach has big consequences for how we think about gender and religion. It suggests that to really change how we see gender, we might need to rethink our entire understanding of God and the language we use to talk about the divine. By linking gender and theology in this way, the text argues that challenging fixed ideas about gender depends on letting go of our current ways of understanding and discussing God (Taussig et al., 2015). The poem is deliberately trying to show how these ideas are connected to fixed gender roles. It hints that the uncertain nature of the speaker in the text might be a result of these religious ideas being challenged. The way God is discussed in the text is shifted away from traditional, authoritative language, which is similar to how gender roles are often presented as natural and unchanging. It seems to expose the weaknesses and limitations of these traditional religious ideas. By doing this, it allows us to question and examine the authority that religion has, especially in how it supports certain societal norms, like gender roles. The text works to break down old religious conventions to reveal what they leave out or take for granted (Fiorenza, 1994). Generally speaking, this dedication focuses on the importance of avoiding sin, lack of self-control, shameful desires, and temporary joys (Wimbush & Valantasis, 2002).

For the sake of our translation analysis, we begin with TT2 due to its greater complexities compared to TT1. The former emphasizes the variety of temptations "أشكال المذات" in the context of "numerous sins". The language used here, such as "الشهوات الجنسية" (sexual desires), is absent in the ST. This introduces a specific aspect of sin that is not explicitly mentioned in the original dedication. This addition in the translation can be analyzed from various perspectives. In other words, it may reflect the translator's choice to *emphasize* certain types of sins, perhaps due to cultural perceptions of what constitutes significant moral transgression. This specificity draws the reader's attention to a particular form of temptation, which could alter the general theme of human fallibility into a more focused observation of sexual behaviour. If we consider this addition from a feminist angle, it could be problematic as it introduces a gendered dimension to the idea of sin. Sexual desires, often policed and stigmatized within many Arab societies, particularly concerning women, can be a sensitive topic. There is a political taboo around topics of sexuality among the Arab regimes in power and, more importantly, among Arab feminist groups, but it is considered intellectually taboo among many Arab peoples (Dialmy, 2005). The addition might inadvertently reinforce gender stereotypes about sexuality as it skews the feminist themes of liberation and personal agency that are prevalent in Morrison's works. As for "الأهواء الدنيئة" (disgraceful passions), it carries a more formal and possibly more intense tone. The phrase "قبل أن يصبحوا حكماء" literally translates as "before they become wise," suggesting a transformation through wisdom. The term "حكماء" (wise) infers a significant moral or intellectual development. The final part, "وسوف يعيشون ولن يموتوا أبدًا" (and they will live and will never die again), offers a strong affirmation of eternal life, with the definitive word "أبدًا"

stressing the permanence of this state. As regards TT1, it uses phrasing, such as "الأشكال السارة" (pleasant forms), which might carry a less severe connotation than TT2. It also uses "غلطات" (errors/inconsistencies), a term that is less commonly used in modern Arabic, which could make the text feel more classical or poetic. Instead of "حكما" (wise), TT1 uses "صاحين" (sober/awake), suggesting clarity or purity rather than wisdom. The final sentiment, "ولن يموتوا ثانية" (and they will not die again), conveys a similar message of eternal life but uses the word "ثانية" (again), which might imply a rebirth or a second chance at life.

TT2 seems to choose more explicit and concrete terms, perhaps to ensure clarity for the reader. This could be a choice to connect more directly with the reader's understanding of specific concepts like sexual desires and eternal life. TT1, while generally and literally close to the ST, contains a possible typographical error and uses more abstract language in some places, which might reflect a different interpretive choice or a typographical oversight.

There are indeed other supplementary observations to be made. For instance, the word "حكما" in TT2 could be seen as signifying not just wisdom but also the power that comes with it; that is, it suggests a liberation from societal expectations and norms. In contrast, TT1's use of "صاحين" focuses on awakening, which could be seen as the first step toward empowerment. Moreover, the choice of words relating to sin and pleasure could also be analyzed for their gendered connotations. TT2's use of "الشهوات الجنسية" directly translates to sexual desires, which may highlight the patriarchal view of women's sexuality as sinful or *transgressive*. TT1's "غلطات" (errors), on the other hand, is less specific and could signify a broader range of transgressions, potentially offering a more inclusive view of moral fallibility that encompasses both genders. We can also deduce a cultural Interpretation of sin and/or redemption. In other words, in TT2, the journey from sin to wisdom reflects a story common in many religious cultures, where the pursuit of wisdom is often portrayed as the path to redemption. TT1's emphasis on becoming "sober" may have different cultural resonances, perhaps aligning more with secular or modern interpretations of personal growth.

Thus, TT2 leans toward a more conventional, perhaps more religiously influenced storyline, highlighting knowledge and everlasting life, even though both versions express the idea of escaping a fallen world and entering a superior existence. There is an emphasis on awakening in TT1, which depicts a more immediate, maybe more individual and secular, metamorphosis.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

All in all, this study has delved into the paratextual elements present in the Arabic translations of Morrison's *Paradise*, offering a comparative analysis that reveals significant insights into the translators' cultural, ideological, and gendered perspectives. The analysis highlights the crucial role of paratextual elements—book covers, title translations, forewords, dedications, and footnotes—in shaping the reception and interpretation of translated literary works within the target culture.

The book covers and title translations in both Arabic versions illustrate how visual and linguistic elements are adapted to resonate with the cultural and religious contexts of the Arabic-speaking audience. The distinct choices in cover design reflect varied interpretive strategies, with Al-Asadi opting for a minimalist and culturally resonant approach, while Basha incorporates more elaborate imagery that aligns with regional artistic traditions. The translations of the title "Paradise" also show a unique understanding of cultural and religious connotations, with Al-Asadi's use of the definite article "الفردوس" evoking specific religious imagery and Basha's open-ended "فردوس" inviting a broader interpretation. The foreword in Basha's translation provides a rich contextual framework that enhances the reader's understanding of Morrison's themes, whereas the absence of a foreword in Al-Asadi's version

suggests different editorial and interpretative priorities. This contrast underscores the importance of paratextual elements in framing the narrative and guiding reader reception. The use of footnotes in Basha's translation, with over 34 annotations, demonstrates a commitment to preserving the cultural and thematic richness of the ST, providing necessary explanations that bridge cultural gaps. In contrast, Al-Asadi's minimal use of footnotes points to a preference for a seamless reading experience, potentially assuming a higher level of cultural familiarity among the target audience. The dedications in both translations, derived from *The Thunder Perfect Mind*, reflect different interpretative choices. Basha's translation introduces specific elements like "sexual desires," adding a gendered dimension to the concept of sin, which might affect the feminist themes in Morrison's work. Al-Asadi's translation, while closer to the ST, uses more abstract language, which might offer a broader interpretation of moral fallibility.

Paratextual elements play a critically facilitative role in minimizing the distance between language and culture, improving the reading experience, and striking a judicious balance between authenticity and intelligibility for the target readers of a translated literary work.

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**AUTHOR S' BIOS**

***Abdelkrim Chirig is an EFL teacher and a PhD candidate in the Applied Language and Culture Studies Lab at Chouaib Doukkali University (UCD) in El Jadida, Morocco. He holds a Master's degree in Translation Sciences and Linguistics. His current doctoral research focuses on the intersection of Translation, Literature, and Gender. Abdelkrim has a wide range of interests, including Translation, Media, Advertising, Semiotics, and Literary Translation.***

***Karima Bouziane is an Associate Professor at Chouaib Doukkali University of El Jadida, Morocco. She holds a Doctorate in Translation Studies and Intercultural Communication and a Master's degree in the same field. Her areas of interest are Intercultural Communication, Advertising, and Audiovisual Translation. Her latest publication is a book entitled, Cultural Transfer in the Translation of Advertising: The Case of English -Arabic Translation of Cosmetic Products, June 2020, Lambert Academic Publishing.***

***Marouane Zakhir is an Associate Professor. He is currently working at Chouaib Doukkali University in El Jadida, Morocco. His research interests are based on his fascination with how language and reality shape each other. He has been exploring this phenomenon from different perspectives in both his research and other practices. He has worked on language policy, language teaching, translation and research-related projects. He has published a number of articles in indexed journals..***