

**THE TRANSLATION OF MYTHICAL AND  
FOLKLORIC ENTITIES IN NAGUIB  
MAHFOUZ'S NOVEL *LAYALI ALF LAYLA* INTO  
ENGLISH**

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MAHFOUZ'S NOVEL *LAYALI ALF LAYLA* INTO  
ENGLISH**

by

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Contrastive Analysis
DTS	Descriptive Translation Studies
M&FE	Mythical and Folkloric Entity
M&FLI	Mythical and Folkloric Lexical Item
SL	Source Language
ST	Source Text
ThTS	Theoretical Translation Studies
TL	Target Language
TS	Translation Strategy
TT	Target Text

**TERJEMAHAN ENTITI MITOS DAN FOKLOR DALAM NOVEL *LAYALI*  
*ALF LAYLA* KARYA NAGUIB MAHFOUZ KE DALAM BAHASA  
INGGERIS**

**ABSTRAK**

Mitologi dan folklor merupakan elemen penting dalam sesebuah budaya. Elemen-elemen ini melibatkan pelbagai makna informatif dan ekspresif serta mencakupi pelbagai latar belakang budaya melalui penggunaan beberapa item leksikal. Item leksikal berunsur mitos dan folklor yang ditemui dalam wacana sastera mewujudkan peluang yang amat baik untuk menerokai konsep budaya yang berkaitan dengan item-item leksikal ini dalam konteks kesusasteraan. Oleh itu, proses menterjemah mitos dan folklor seharusnya dilihat sebagai satu usaha menghasilkan semula budaya dan sastera bahasa sumber secara estetik dan menyampaikannya dalam bahasa sasaran dengan menggunakan strategi terjemahan yang bersesuaian. Kajian ini merupakan satu usaha untuk mengkaji kebolehterjemahan mitos dan folklor daripada bahasa Arab kepada bahasa Inggeris. Secara khususnya, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti dan mengkaji entiti berunsur mitos dan folklor dalam novel *Layali Alf Layla* karya Naguib Mahfouz dan membincangkan strategi yang digunakan untuk menterjemahkan unsur-unsur tersebut ke dalam bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini memanfaatkan metodologi kajian penterjemahan deskriptif yang sistematik (DTS) dan taksonomi Baker (2018) dan juga analisis perbandingan oleh James (1980) yang melibatkan prosedur dua langkah. Bagi melaksanakan kajian ini, item leksikal bahasa Arab yang berkaitan

dengan mitos dan foklor diekstrak, disenaraikan dan dihuraikan dengan mengambil kira aspek latar belakang budaya dan linguistiknya. Padanannya dalam terjemahan bahasa Inggeris, iaitu "*Arabian Nights and Days*", turut dikenal pasti dan dibincangkan, dengan mengambil kira latar belakang budaya dan linguistiknya. Pasangan perkataan ini kemudiannya dibandingkan untuk mengenal pasti hubungan antara item yang berpadanan dan untuk mengenal pasti dan membincangkan strategi terjemahan yang digunakan. Berdasarkan analisis perbandingan yang dilakukan, kajian ini mendapati bahawa kaedah terbaik untuk mengenal pasti entiti berunsur mitos dan foklor yang digunakan oleh seseorang penulis dalam sebuah teks tertentu adalah gabungan dua pendekatan. Pendekatan pertama bergantung pada pengetahuan kumulatif yang terkandung dalam kajian lampau yang berkaitan, manakala pendekatan kedua adalah berasaskan pengalaman peribadi penterjemah dalam menentukan entiti berunsur mitos dan foklor yang terjalin dalam teks. Kajian ini juga mengenal pasti 12 strategi terjemahan yang digunakan dalam menangani ketidakbolehterjemahan item mitos dan foklor yang ditemui dalam teks sumber. Selain itu, dapatan kajian menegaskan peranan penting penterjemah sebagai pentafsir budaya, yang menilai teks dan menentukan penggunaan strategi yang paling sesuai untuk menterjemah setiap item mitos dan foklor. Akhir sekali, dapatan kajian membantu dalam merangka garis panduan tiga fasa yang dicadangkan tentang proses terjemahan mitos dan foklor yang menekankan aspek mengenal pasti elemen mitos dan foklor, menterjemah item mitos dan foklor serta melakukan analisis tekstual terhadap pasangan yang digandingkan bagi meminimumkan anjakan dalam terjemahan.

**THE TRANSLATION OF MYTHICAL AND FOLKLORIC ENTITIES IN  
NAGUIB MAHFOUZ'S NOVEL *LAYALI ALF LAYLA* INTO ENGLISH**

**ABSTRACT**

Mythology and folklore are essential parts of any culture. They evoke a tremendous amount of informative and expressive meanings and encapsulate various cultural backgrounds using a few lexical items. The mythical and folkloric lexical items (M&FLIs) found in literary discourse present an excellent opportunity to investigate the cultural concepts of these lexical items within a vivid literary context. Thus, the process of translating myths and folklore is better considered as an endeavour to aesthetically recreate the culture and literature of the source language (SL) and render them into the target language (TL) using appropriate translation strategies (TSs). The current study is an attempt to investigate the translatability of myths and folklore from Arabic into English. More specifically, it aims to examine the mythical and folkloric entities (M&FEs) in Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Layali Alf Layla* and to explore the strategies used to translate them into English. This study relies on the methodology for systematic descriptive translation studies (DTS) and Baker's taxonomy (2018) on the one hand and James's (1980) two-step procedure of contrastive analysis (CA) on the other. The Arabic lexical items are located, listed, and described within their cultural and linguistic context to carry out the study. Their counterparts in the English translation are also located and discussed, taking into consideration their cultural and linguistic background. The corresponding pairs are then compared to identify the relationships between the lexical items and to examine

the TSs employed. Based on the CA, the study finds that the best method to find out the M&FEs employed by an individual author in a particular text is a combination of two approaches. The first one depends on the accumulative knowledge found in the previous related literature and the second one stems from the translator's personal experience to find out the M&FEs interwoven in the text. The study also finds that twelve TSs were employed to deal with the untranslatability of M&FLIs found in the source text (ST). Also, the findings assert the significant role of the translator as a cultural interpreter who judges the text and decides on the best strategy to be used while translating each M&FLI. Finally, the findings of the study helped in drawing a suggested three-phase outline of the process of translating myths and folklore, which are: identifying the M&FEs, translating the M&FLIs, and conducting a textual analysis of the coupled-pairs to minimise the translation shift.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter is an introductory section that outlines the study and gives a brief background of its most important elements. It sets the problem statement, states clear objectives to be achieved, and formulates a number of questions to be addressed. The research methodology is also described in this chapter to offer a glimpse of what is going to be further elaborated in Chapter 3. Chapter 1 also sets the limitations of the study and clarifies its importance. In this chapter, the most significant concepts are also defined. The last section outlines the organisation of the study.

### 1.2 Background of the Study

George Steiner writes: “Without translation, we would be living in provinces bordering on silence”. This is why translators are considered as pioneers who struggle to cross these borders and bridge the gaps between translatability and untranslatability through language and culture in a process that, according to Muhaidat and Neimneh (2011), “goes beyond transferring the meaning of words from one language into another” (p. 14). The role of translators as cultural interpreters who manage to fill such cultural gaps between different cultures is proved to be at the core of all the translation projects since the dawn of time. Translators are responsible for understanding cultures and finding out the

peculiarities that differentiate each culture from the other, which are expressed using culture-bound lexical items in relatively different lingual systems. These lexical items create problematic questions that need to be answered after understanding the differences between cultures and languages. To sum up, Guessabi (2013) concludes that language and culture are the same and translating a language means translating the culture.

Directly linked to culture, is literature, which is considered an important component of the culture of any community. An excellent example of literature is novel, which is one of the significant components of culture which fuses fiction, reality, ideology, mythology, and other ingredients to produce rich pieces of art. Whether we aim at tracing the existence of Arabic novel as “a narrative literature since the very early times” through examples of the folk romance of *Antara* or *The Thousand and One Nights* (Sakkut, 2000, p. 13), or accepting the opinion mentioned by Allen (1982) that “there is fairly general agreement among critics that its origins lie in the Western traditions” (p. 15), Arabic novel remains an essential part of modern Arabic literature that can only be appreciated by those who understand the culture, as well as the language of the Arabic text. Thus, Allen (2015) considers the translation of literature as an interdisciplinary process that includes culture and necessitates the translator’s knowledge of the two cultures and literary traditions.

Therefore, a good mastery of the methods and strategies of literary translation is required to overcome the problems that accompany the process of translating novels. These problems include the lack of the translator’s freedom in comparison with the author of the literary text, the necessity of rendering the aesthetic value of the ST, the need of understanding the basic concepts of literature



and literary translation of both languages, the role of the translator in interpreting and communicating the two cultures and further problematic issues. These problems become more complicated when a translator has to cope with folkloric or mythological entities inherent in the ST.

Nida's (1964) analysis of the linguistic and cultural distance between the SL and TL provides the translator with a clear guideline to understand the various levels of "sameness", "similarity" and "differences" between different languages and cultures. These differences can complicate the process of translating mythical and folkloric lexical items (M&FLIs) from one language into another. This process basically depends on a correct interpretation of myths and folklore within its original context and an appropriate encoding of their concepts into the translation. The attempts to translate the M&FLIs from one language into another necessitates conducting the translation process within its cultural surroundings, taking into consideration the norms and strategies of translating culture. Also, since Mythical and Folkloric Entities (M&FEs) are essential parts of any culture's literary heritage, working within the literary translation framework greatly facilitates the translator's task. Thus, understanding the methods and procedures of translating literature and culture in addition to understanding the different types of shifting of the M&FEs enable the translator to handle such lexical items, which can be partially shifted or totally distorted. To sum up, translating mythology and folklore requires a good knowledge of the history and cultural heritage behind such entities, a wide experience to find the appropriate translation method that maintains as much as possible of the original meaning and above all, the sensitivity to identify and locate M&FLIs in the ST.

The current study is focusing on the translation of the M&FLIs from Arabic into English, which can be better understood by taking into consideration Holmes's (2000) objectives and categories of translation studies. Following Holmes's map (1972), Holmes/ Toury's map (1995), and van Doorslaer's map (2007) the current study can fit into the first category of translation studies, i.e., descriptive translation studies (DTS), and more specifically into the product-oriented type of DTS, which is an essential area of academic research that describes an existing translation and "provides the materials for surveys of larger corpora of translations" (Holmes, 2000, p 177). It also aspires to offer a framework for individual studies of all kinds (Toury, 2012, p. 5). DTS is one of the two branches of pure translation studies, which in turn includes three types of research studies labelled according to their focus. These subdivisions are product-oriented, function-oriented, and process-oriented DTS. For the current study, the most important branch is the product-oriented DTS, which investigates an existing translation and has a very important role for academic research in translation studies. In general understanding, the position of the current study can facilitate the reader's understanding of its theoretical framework, which explores the big picture and sets the borderlines of translation as an independent field of knowledge.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

In an ideal situation, a literary translation will transfer form and content in addition to culture and experience. It will be able to bridge the cultural gaps and create the same intellectual effect. It will evoke and provoke the same feelings and responses among the audience of both SL and TL.

The problems of literary translation stem from the nature of the literary text itself, which is, according to Razumovskaya (2012), an interdependent unity of form and content that carries different types of information such as cognitive, cultural, and aesthetic. Thus, translation of literature is considered a literary recreation of a particular work written in one language into another. Therefore, some theorists deem literary translation to be an impossible task due to various reasons, such as; semantic, grammatical, idiomatic and cultural reasons (Haque, 2012, p. 101). On the other hand, Allen (2015) opines that literary translation is an act of interpretation that necessitates the translator to master both languages, both cultures, and the literary traditions of both nations.

However, translating literary texts in general and those including myths and folklore, in particular, is a possible but troublesome task that requires a significant effort to be achieved. This hardship is partly due to the relativity of the concept of mythology since what is considered a religious fact in one religion, such as Christianity, is viewed as a myth for Hindus or Brahman and vice versa (Leeming, 2004, p. ix). Similarly, Inder (2017) argues that “it is entirely possible to hold that what constitutes a pragmatic “truth” in one time and place may never fully translate to a “truth” for another society” (p. 10). In other words, myth can be interpreted and understood in different ways. It “is not explained in the same terms by every culture or even by the same culture in different periods” (Schweitzer, 2004, p. 217).

Another problematic aspect of translating the M&FLIs can be understood in light of Nida’s concept of linguistic and cultural distance between the SL and TL, which indicates the existence of different levels of “sameness,” “similarity”, and “differences” between languages and cultures (Nida, 1964, p. 160). This concept entails the existence of these levels between the myths and folklore of different

languages and cultures, which affects the process of “recodification” in different ways. Roth (1998) states that the text’s recodification “into different languages in different cultural environments is certainly the most difficult kind of translation as it involves both an interlingual and an intercultural transformation” ( p. 246- 247). The previous untranslatability issues urge for conducting a study to further investigate the translation of the M&FEs.

In addition to that, the current study tries to fill the gap in the related literature and address the scarcity of studies highlighting myth and folklore in the Arabic language especially those studies which investigate the translation of the M&FEs from Arabic into English.

Despite the fact that many studies investigate the literary product of Mahfouz, such studies did not focus on myth and folklore as the main topic, nor conduct comprehensive scientific research to examine them (Shalan, 2006, p. 14). Thus, very few studies that are dedicated entirely to study myth and folklore in Mahfouz’s literary works can be found. One of the most significant examples of these references is Shalan’s book (2006) “*Al-Austora Fi Rwayat Naguib Mahfouz*”, (Myth in the Novels of Naguib Mahfouz). Similarly, many sources tackle the translation of myth and folklore in other languages, but there is a noticeable lack of studies investigating the translation of myth and folklore from Arabic into English and according to the researcher’s best knowledge, no studies have been conducted on the translation of this aspect in Mahfouz’s novels.

Thus, the current study focuses only on this aspect. The study is a translation oriented textual analysis of an Arabic novel and the challenges and

procedures of translating myths and folklore from Arabic into English. This study draws the translators' attention to the unique nature of myths and folklore and the translatability issues related to them, which cause many mistakes in the outcomes of the translation process. The study comes as an attempt to fill the gap in the related literature and to create a more sensitive analysis of the culture behind the language of myth and folklore in order to render them as naturally, aesthetically, and accurately as possible.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The study aims at exploring some of the problems faced by translators in the practice of translating myth and folklore in literary texts. More specifically, the study seeks to examine the English translation of the M&FEs in Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Layali Alf Layla*, which is published in 1979 and translated by Denys Johnson-Davies in 1995 as *Arabian Nights and Days*. The study has the following objectives:

1. Identifying the M&FEs in Mahfouz's novel *Layali Alf Layla* and their counterparts in the English translation, *Arabian Nights and Days*,
2. Analyzing the methods and strategies used in translating myth and folklore in *Layali Alf Layla* into English,
3. Investigating the translatability of myth and folklore in *Layali Alf Layla* into English as a representative example of the Arabic novel in general.

## 1.5 Research Questions

Based on the objectives outlined, this study aims to address the following questions:

1. What are the M&FEs employed by Mahfouz in his novel *Layali Alf Layla* and their equivalents in English?
2. Which methods and strategies are applied by the translator to handle myth and folklore while translating *Layali Alf Layla* into English?
3. How can the issue of the translatability of myth and folklore in *Layali Alf Layla* be addressed in order to provide possible solutions and enhance the translation?

## 1.6 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the current study is based on a two-fold approach. First, it aims at locating its position within the discipline as a part of DTS through investigating Holmes's map. Holmes's map was originally presented in 1972 by James S. Holmes. It was significantly developed by Gideon Toury as (Holmes /Toury's Map) by 1995, in addition to these two maps a new conceptual map, which was developed and explained by Luc van Doorslaer in 2007 and known as Doorslaer's Map, is also studied (Munday, 2016). The second part of the study's theoretical framework adopts Baker's taxonomy, which was introduced in 1992 in Mona Baker's book "*In Other Words*". The taxonomy was developed in the 2018 edition of the same book (Baker, 2018). Baker (2018) discussed the different types of equivalences and further explained the strategies suggested by van Doorslaer.

Baker illustrates how she appropriately employed these strategies to handle the translation problems of each level in her equivalence taxonomy.

In his paper “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies”, Holmes (2000) laid the translation studies’ foundations as a distinguished field. He drew the primary map of translation studies, dividing it into applied and pure translation studies. The applied part is divided in turn into three branches; translator training, translation aids, and translation criticism. Meanwhile, pure translation studies are divided into theoretical translation studies (ThTS) and DTS. DTS branch, which is the most crucial type for the current study, is divided into a product, process, and function-oriented studies.

Furthermore, Toury (2012) thoroughly discussed DTS, starting with Holmes’s map, which he considered as the basic guideline for organising translation studies. Toury focused on DTS and elaborated on the discussion about its relationship with the translation theory and the applied extensions of the translation studies. Toury called for the development of this branch and suggested a three-phase methodology for systematic DTS.

To zoom in on the details, van Doorslaer (2009) drew a new, developed map that distinguishes between “Translation” and “Translation Studies”. The map is rich in details which discuss different concepts related to translation and translation studies. Van Doorslaer’s map explains many subcategories, such as the modes of translation, the transference process, in addition to the rules, norms, and laws of translation. In van Doorslaer’s version of the discipline map, DTS, the field under which the current study is located, is discussed as a subcategory of the research method of the translation studies.

Baker's (2018) taxonomy, which was introduced for the first time in Mona Baker's book "*In Other Words*" in 1992, is employed in the current study to develop the discussion about van Doorslaer translation strategies (TSs) and to investigate the different levels of equivalence, their relationships with each other and the role they play in translation. Baker's six levels of taxonomy can be illustrated as an inverted pyramid starting from the word level of equivalence up to the semiotic level. It also consists of the level above the word, the grammatical level, the textual level, and the pragmatic level. Since mythological and folkloric terms are usually bound to the word and the above word levels of equivalence, the first level of Baker's taxonomy are closely investigated in this study.

## **1.7 Methodology**

The current study analyses the translation of myth and folklore in Arabic novel undertaken by the literary translator Denys Johnson-Davies with particular reference to Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Layali Alf Layla*.

The Arabic source text (ST) is selected due to its plethora of examples. The novel itself is thoroughly studied by the researcher using the appropriate definitions of myths and folklore. In addition to the researcher's repetitive thorough readings, other sources, like Shalan (2006), are also consulted to fulfil this purpose.

After identifying the examples, a contrastive analysis (CA) of the Arabic ST and the English target text (TT) is conducted to investigate each example individually. Firstly, authentic references in Arabic and English are consulted to provide sufficient background in both languages and cultures. Secondly, each lexical item in the SL and TL is contrastively analysed in accordance with Baker's



taxonomy (2018) and the framework of DTS. The analysis is conducted to identify the methods and strategies used and to explore how myths and folklore are rendered and how impediments hinder the translation process. This analysis reveals the untranslatability issues (when found) and helps in identifying the misguided translations.

Keeping in mind that accurate translation increases the depth of the TT and enhances its aesthetic value, the current study tracks the rendering of meanings of each example. It assesses the translation quality and the efficiency of the strategies used in the translation process following Baker's taxonomy and the guidelines of DTS. The whole methodology helps the researcher to suggest a general outline of the process of translating mythical and folkloric items from Arabic into English (see Figure 5.1 p. 254).

## **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

The current study investigates the translation of myths and folklore in Mahfouz's novel *Layali Alf Layla*. To achieve this goal, the study is limited to;

- a. Locate and analyse the M&FLIs only in Mahfouz's *Layali Alf Layla*.
- b. Contrastively analyse the translation of M&FLIs found in the translation of Mahfouz's novel by Denys Johnson-Davies titled *Arabian Nights and Days*.

Holmes's map (1972), Holmes/ Toury's map (1995), and van Doorslaer's map (2007) are applied, and Baker's taxonomy (2018) is used to investigate the

translation of myths and folklore since it assists in determining the quality of translation and examines the strategies used in rendering the addressed items.

### **1.9 Significance of the Study**

A study on the subject of literary translation and specifically in the area of myth and folklore is still essential since literary translation is one of the most problematic types of translation, mainly when translating such profound aspects of literature as mythology and folklore.

The findings of this study can be useful for translation students, translation teachers, and professional translators. The students of translation will be introduced and familiarised with mythology and folklore and the critical role they play in the ST and TT. Translation teachers will be able to revise the traditional methods of translation and utilise the ones that fit the syllabi and meet students' needs and abilities.

The findings of this study can also enhance the awareness of mythology and folklore among translators, which will improve the level of translating literary texts, highlight the importance of digging deeper to decode and encode mythology and folklore and identify the most applicable methods of translating them.

Furthermore, a general three-phase outline of the process of translating myths and folklore is suggested based on the study's conclusion, the systematic analysis and comparison of the used strategies in addition to the thorough investigation of the whole methodology applied in the current study. This outline may help the translators enhance the process of translating the M&FLIs and

enlighten other researchers' paths to develop specific outlines for other cultural-bound lexical items.

Finally, investigating this issue emphasises the complexity of translating the M&FEs found in the source culture, highlights the impact of the different interpretations of these entities on translation product, and stresses the critical role of the culturally and lingually well-informed translator in translating the cultural aspects of the ST without sacrificing their informative and aesthetic values. The current study aspires to add value to the body of the academic research that tackles the translation of the Arabic M&FEs into English and contributes in addressing the scarcity of academic research about this topic.

#### **1.10 Definition of Key Concepts**

**Baker's Taxonomy:** is a hierarchal multidimensional "model for translation quality assessment" (Dabbaghian & Solimany, 2013, p. 281) based on equivalence. The taxonomy is theorised by the Egyptian-British translator, author, and professor of translation studies, Mona Baker and consists of six levels for equivalences starting from the word level, up to the semiotic level and containing the following levels: above word level, grammatical level, textual level, and pragmatic level (Baker, 2018).

**Contrastive Analysis (CA):** "is a linguistic enterprise aimed at producing inverted (i.e., contrastive, not comparative) two-valued typologies (a CA is always concerned with a pair of languages) and founded on the assumption that languages can be compared" (James, 1980, p. 3).

**Culture:** “the totality of human knowledge, beliefs, lifestyle, patterns of behaviour derived from Man’s ability to absorb knowledge and transmit it from one member of the social community to another from one generation to another” (Ivir, 2003, p. 117).

**Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS):** is one of the two branches of the pure translation studies that includes three types of research studies; product-oriented, process-oriented, and function-oriented. DTS aim at describing translating and translation and establishing basic principles to explain and predict translation and the process of translating (Holmes, 2000, p. 176).

**Folklore:** “Something voluntarily and informally communicated, created or done by members of a group (which can be of any size, age, or social and educational level); it can circulate through whatever media (oral, written or visual) are available to this group; it has roots in the past, but also present relevance; it usually recurs in many places, in similar but not quite identical form; it has both stable and variable features and evolves through dynamic adaptation to new circumstances” (Simpson & Roud, 2000, p. 131).

**Folktales:** “all prose narratives following traditional storylines, which are told orally, or were so told in previous generations. It thus covers fairy tales, legends of all types, memorates, fables, tall tales, and humorous anecdotes. The original author is always unknown; in the rare cases where an individual who shaped the current version has been identified, the tellers are unaware of this” (Simpson & Roud, 2000, p. 132).

**Literary Translation:** “is, in essence, an act of aesthetic communication for the language of the literary text, [that] does not only inform, i.e., convey lexical meanings, but it also communicates and aesthetically affects” (As-Safi, 2006, p. 7).

**Magic Realism:** “is a literary movement associated with a style of writing or technique that incorporates magical or supernatural events into a realistic narrative without questioning the improbability of these events. This fusion of fact and fantasy is meant to question the nature of reality as well as call attention to the act of creation” (Milne, 2009, p. 437).

**Mythical and Folkloric Entities (M&FEs):** the word entity (plural: entities) is defined in Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary as “existence, being, something with separate and real existence” (“Entity,” 2004, p. 240). The M&FEs, in the current study, refer to the seventy-four examples found in the ST and have the mythical and folkloric features and characteristics that meet the general definitions of myths and folklore. These entities make an integral part of the Arabic mythical and folkloric heritage and can be traced and located in the Arabic mythology and folktales.

**Mythology:** “a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of deities and other supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives. Most myths are related to social rituals” (Abrams, 1999, p. 170).

**Myths:** “Stories about divine beings, generally arranged in a coherent system; they are revered as true and sacred; they are endorsed by rulers and priests,

and closely linked to religion. Once this link is broken, and the actors in the story are not regarded as gods, but as human heroes, giants, or fairies, it is no longer a myth but a folktale” (Simpson & Roud, 2000, p. 254).

**Novel:** The English word is derived from the Italian novella (literally, “a little new thing”), which is an extended work of fiction written in prose and differs from other types of prose in its lengthy nature that allows a more significant variety of characters, a greater complication of the plot (or plots), ampler development of milieu, and more sustained exploration of character and motives than do the shorter, more concentrated modes (Abrams, 1999, p. 190).

**The Discipline Maps:** The maps are hierarchy illustrations that organise the most fundamental terms and concepts that are related to translating and translation. Any map strives to illustrate the relationships between the various components of the field and to clarify the theoretical framework that governed it. In the current study, three major maps are studied, which are Holmes’s map, 1972, Holmes/Toury’s map, 1995, and van Doorslaer’s map, 2007.

**Translatability:** “A term used – along with its opposite, untranslatability – to discuss the extent to which it is possible to translate either individual words and phrases or entire texts from one language to another” (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014, p. 179).

**Translation Methods:** a group of methods that correspond to a high degree of complexity. The translation methods are generally divided into direct (literal) translation methods and oblique translation methods. They “may be used either on their own or combined with one or more of the others” (Vinay & Darbelnet, 2000,

pp. 84-93). The methods are applied to address the three levels of expression, i.e. lexis, syntactic structure, and message (Vinay & Darbelnet, 2000).

**Translation Procedure:** “is a specific technique used at a given point in a text (e.g., borrowing, calque...)” (Munday, 2016, p. 24).

**Translation Strategy (TS):** “is the overall orientation of a translated text (e.g., literal translation...)” (Munday, 2016, p. 24).

**Translation Studies:** “to be understood as a collective and inclusive designation for all research activities taking the phenomena of translating and translation as their basis or focus” (Koller, 1971, p. 4 cited in Holmes, 2000, p. 176).

## **1.11 Organisation of the Study**

This study consists of five chapters:

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter that includes the basic outline of the current study. It presents the problem statement, the objectives, and the questions of the study. The first chapter also introduces the theoretical framework, the methodology, the limitations, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 presents a thorough review of the related literature, exploring the most critical areas of this study. It discusses myths and folklore, paying particular attention to myths and folklore in the Arab world. The chapter also investigates the Arabic novel and magic realism in its Arabic and global context. It also investigates the concept of untranslatability and various components of the literary translation and finally examines the most significant maps of the discipline.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and design, explaining the theoretical framework, and outlining the theoretical structure of the study.

Chapter 4 analyses the translation of myths and folklore in Mahfouz's novel *Layali Alf Layla / Arabian Nights and Days*. Seventy-four examples are contrastively analysed, in terms of culture and language, with emphasis on their mythical and folkloric meanings in the ST and TT.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings concluded from the data analysis in the previous chapter. It suggests a general outline of the process of translating myths and folklore, highlights the need for further investigation to fill the possible gaps related to the topic, and recommends probable areas of future studies.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the concept of mythology and folklore and emphasises the importance of a proper understanding of these concepts within the literary context to facilitate the translator's task. It surveys the Arabic myth and folklore to put the current study within its bigger context. It also discusses the "Arabic novel" as a relatively new genre in Arabic literature, reviewing its history, development, and paying particular attention to Naguib Mahfouz and his novel "*Layali Alf Layla*". It also investigates international and Arabic magic realism as the frame in which Mahfouz's novel can be better analysed and understood. Also, this chapter tackles the concepts of untranslatability and literary translation. It investigates some of the most significant attempts, to draw some maps of translation studies such as Holmes's map (1972), Holmes/Toury's map (1995), and van Doorslaer's map (2007). The mapping part helps to understand the nature of DTS and evaluate its role in the theoretical framework of the current study. Chapter 2 finally ends by highlighting some significant points related to the process of translating myths and folklore as an integral part of translating culture and briefly introduces the translation of Mahfouz's novel and its translator.

## 2.2 Myths and Folklore

Myths and folklore are blurred concepts with no clear-cut definitions. They were created by the ancient Man and orally passed down from one generation to another before they were recorded and adapted into plays, poems, or novels after the invention of writing (Wilkinson, 2009). The oral narration style of myths and folktales exposed them to deliberate or unconscious mutations before they were recorded in written forms (Inder, 2017, p. 1). However, myths and folklore are usually defined differently according to the different perspectives of the studies approaching them, but most of the definitions revolve around being a tale or a story.

Myths are defined as “stories about divine beings, generally arranged in a coherent system; they are revered as true and sacred; they are endorsed by rulers and priests, and closely linked to religion” (Simpson & Roud, 2000, p. 254). They are also defined as “stories of the gods of, heroes and of great cosmic events” (Wilkinson, 2009, p. 6). Myths are also considered as “symbolic stories of identity and transition created by humans in a cultural context and upheld by that culture” (Inder, 2017, p. 1).

On the other hand, folklore is defined as “something voluntarily and informally communicated, created or done by members of a group; it can circulate through whatever media are available to this group; it has roots in the past, but also present relevance” (Simpson & Roud, 2000, p. 131). To be specific, verbal folklore “includes any kind of lore involving words, whether set to music, organised in chronological story form or simply labelling an activity or expressing a belief with a word or phrase” (Sims & Stephens, 2011, p.12). Meanwhile, folktales which are prime representatives of folklore can be defined as “all prose narratives following

traditional storylines, which are told orally, or were so told in previous generations. It includes fairy tales, legends of all types, memorates, fables, tall tales, and humorous anecdotes” (Simpson & Roud, 2000, p. 132). More strictly, the folktale is defined as “a short narrative in prose of unknown authorship which has been transmitted orally” (Abrams, 1999, p. 101).

However, a fine line can be drawn between what is mythical and what is folkloric according to the story’s protagonist and its theme. In general, when the protagonist of a traditional story is a human being, it is usually called a legend. Suppose the story is about supernatural beings other than gods. In that case, it is usually considered as a folktale, i.e. a myth involves gods as supernatural beings, while a folktale is concerned with supernatural beings other than gods (Abrams, 1999, p. 101). In addition to that, Simpson and Roud (2000) highlight this difference by clarifying the connection between myth which is revered as true and sacred and divine beings on the one hand and the transformation of such myth into a folktale when the link is broken between the myth and the divine beings on the other. In other words, the story is considered a myth until its actors are not considered gods, but human heroes, giants or fairies, then it is a legend or a folktale. The same difference is repeatedly mentioned by other researchers such as Constantine (2009), who stated that the folktales are usually considered “traditional stories popularly regarded as the telling of historical events” (Constantine, 2009, p. 447). Meanwhile, when the stories involve some form of the supernatural, they are usually considered myths in which the creatures are “aligned with the gods, mythologised, and celebrated in art” (Constantine, 2009, p. 448).

Analysing the difference between mythology and folklore invokes many questions about the real relationship between them and their similarities and

differences. These questions are thoroughly discussed in Kim-Maloney et al. (2014), who manage to establish some differences between mythology and folklore as follows:

Mythology is the first form of collective consciousness, a part of world picture in which elements of religion, arts, science, social, and subsistence practice are integrated. Folklore is the first collective creative work (oral language, music, drama, choreography). The roots of folklore are in mythology and therefore folklore is a secondary, later phenomenon. The main difference between mythology and folklore lies in the notion that a myth is a knowledge about the world, society and religion (people usually believe in myths) but folklore is fine literature, in which it may be hard to believe. Mythology and folklore also have common features: they both are collective creation. Folklore contains mythological elements (Mechkovskaya, 1998). Many myths are so old that they are no longer even understood within their original context, but have penetrated into folklore as its components, combinations, metamorphoses and metaphors. Thus, there is not a sharp border between myths and folklore works (p. 93).

However, this relationship between myth, folklore, and religion can be established by the fact that any myth or folktale is dealing, one way or another, with at least one supernatural entity mentioned or created by a particular religion at a certain point of time. All the different cultural groups cannot unanimously accept the truth behind what is mythical and religious. The controversial dispute, among scholars, about the religious truth behind folklore and myths, as discussed earlier by Constantine (2009), on the one hand, and the truth of these notions as investigated by Sims and Stephens (2011), who examined the relationships between the “religious belief and folk belief” (Sims & Stephens, 2011, p.65) on the other, forced Weeks (2015) to resort to using the general broad term “story” to refer to the examples from the Hebrew Bible to avoid being involved in the dialectical argument of being a myth or history. Weeks states that:

by “myth” I mean some sort of a story. Hence I am going to use the term “story” rather than “myth” to be unambiguous. Further using “story” will allow me to use examples from the Hebrew Bible without involving this investigation in disputes about whether the “story” in question is “myth” or “history” (Weeks, 2015, p. 93).

This approach can be endorsed in this study to fulfil the same purpose since the religious belief systems varies within the Muslims community itself to include different sects and groups such as Muslim Sunnis, Shias, and Sufis among others, whose interpretations of some key figures and concepts is so polarised to the extent that makes it more applicable to adopt Weeks’s (2015) understanding on this issue. This point is clearly illustrated in some of the study’s examples, such as Example 4.16 and Example 4.70.

The previously mentioned polarisation in interpreting myths and folklore complicates the already complicated translation task and necessitates that the translator broadens his horizon and puts more effort into understanding the myths and folklore of other cultural groups. This can be facilitated by adapting Leeming’s (2004) point of view in which he introduces the notion of relativity in interpreting the mythology and discusses the mutual influence between mythology and religion to be able to strike a balance between what is factual and what is mythical in other faiths. Leeming opines that the religious stories of a particular culture are taken for granted by those who believe in it. In contrast, the stories of other religions are considered as mere folklore. However, these stories remain an essential part of other people’s cultural identity. For those people, the stories are facts that represent a certain level of truth about their culture and identity. The following extract summarises this point of view:

The Hebrew story of the parting of the Sea of Reeds or the Christian story of the resurrection of Jesus are myths to Hindus, as is the Zuni creation story to Christians or the concept of Brahman to Jews. But

with nonexclusionary vision, other people's religious narratives can be seen as tribe-defining cultural dreams and as significant metaphors that can speak truthfully to people across cultural and sectarian boundaries (Leeming, 2004, p. ix).

Inder (2017) hammers the same idea of relativism discussed earlier, saying that; "It is entirely possible to hold that what constitutes a pragmatic "truth" in one time and place may never fully translate to a "truth" for another society" (Inder, 2017, p. 10). He analyses the myth in the Holy Scriptures and depicts how Christian theologies and philosophers interpret and try to understand the relationship between myth and religious truth. Inder argues that comparing myths from different cultures and religions increases the self-awareness of one's myth by discovering inter-religious and inter-cultural differences that increase the self-knowledge and the knowledge about others. This point of view highlights the importance of understanding others' myths and folklore to start any successful translation project.

Whatever the mythical and folkloric stories' interpretations are, they played an essential role in creating and forming the literature even for those who stopped believing in them as religious or spiritual values. According to Abrams (1999), the poets who no longer believe in Jupiter, Venus, Prometheus, Wotan, Adam and Eve, and Jonah kept using them in their literary works. Some great authors like R. W. J. Schelling and Friedrich Schlegel asserted the importance of developing "a new unifying mythology which will synthesise the insights of the myths of the Western past with the new discoveries of philosophy and the physical science" (Abrams, 1999, p. 171). Whether inherited or invented in literature, the role of mythology is asserted by many modern writers who integrated ancient myths into their modern works such as "Ulysses" by James Joyce, "The Waste Land" by T. S. Eliot, "Mourning Becomes Electra" by Eugene O'Neill and many others.