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**Fluctuations of Domestication and Foreignization  
In English Translations  
Of Omar Khayyam's Quatrains**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of arts in Translation Studies**

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# In the Name of God

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## ***Abstract***

Translation theories have been controversial on whether translation should domesticate or foreignize the original text. Venuti (1995) defines domesticating translation as a replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that is linguistically and culturally intelligible to the target language reader. Foreignizing translation refers to a trend through which the linguistic and cultural difference of the translated text gets obvious by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language.

For my research, I have picked out four English translations of Omar Khayyam's quatrains. My main objective has been to analyze the relationship between earlier and later translations since theoretically speaking, translating Khayyam's quatrains in 2001 should be easier than it was in 1859 because the relations have heightened and the mass media including internet or other innovations of the second millennium have improved.

This study was written in order to investigate the concepts and images FitzGerald and three other translators have adopted to domesticate their translations. FitzGerald has invented a special persona out of this Persian poet, astronomer, and mathematician; others following him have done so. The comparison of these images at both word level and quatrain level in the original and the translations reveals the extent to which these translators have hovered and swayed on the dichotomy of domestication and foreignization.

Looking through the translations of Khayyam's quatrains reveals that FitzGerald and the other three translators investigated here have done so many alterations and modifications due to their own colonialist ideas.

Following these comparisons, I came to the findings, which revealed the later translators have imitated the earlier ones mainly Fitzgerald. This case of imitation had also come to pass on from translator to translator even in some mistranslation

cases! Another finding, which was hidden behind a flickering clue, suggested that the translators had not referred to the original for translation and even the forerunner i.e. FitzGerald had referred to a Persian original written in a Latinate form rather than in Persian alphabet. In some other cases, the culture specific images had been omitted in translation or shifted to some western images. In short, the diction and subtexts of the quatrains showed a great deal of alterations, substitutions and omissions to conform to the western sociocultural setting with only the style and the names used in translations left intact to add a tinge of Iranian culture to the translations.

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# Chapter One

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Overview

Literature has only recently dedicated a corner to translation studies. Previously it was regarded as a minor corner in linguistics. Improvements and interrogative mind of human being raised questions and sought to find answers to them. In finding answers, he realized that categorization of the field can solve the problem and answer the posed questions better. Gradually, translation studies received attention, left the corner of minority, and came to the arena as an independent course of study.

Little by little, translation studies broadened in its own field and constituted corners and layers. One important part grew on cultural aspects. Culturally, two languages have something in common and sometimes a lot more in difference. Since postcolonial turn, translators and translation theoreticians have become much concerned about whatever comes under the domain of nationality. Hence, the significance of cultural aspects of translation has become more and more prominent.

The degree of fluency in a translation and regarding cultural aspects in translation turned to the germination of a strategy named domestication and foreignization. This strategy aroused a lot of controversy. Some were in favor of fluency and maintained that a translated text should be fluent for the reader. This was advocated by the power of commission. Hegemony prescribed fluency and so domestication. Colonialism made Anglo-Saxon culture predominant. It favored domestication whereby cultures other than Anglo-Saxon were felt inferior.

In reaction to this power of commission and colonialism, Venuti (following Berman) came to revolt. Schleiermacher had also the same view of leading the

reader to the source language author (qtd. in Munday 2008, 28). They said, there should be a place for the translator who is regarded as invisible in colonialism. They maintained that translators should be visible in their translations and have a patent or an authorship right. To attain this, Venuti's "call for action" is a loud cry of calling for help to rescue translators from this miserable condition and lead them toward the visibility (Venuti 1997, 313).

Foreignization dominated Victorian era in which FitzGerald's domesticated masterpiece germinated. This trend of domestication transferred to the works of other translators of Khayyam's quatrains following FitzGerald.

In this study the degree and domains of domestication in their works are investigated.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study**

Although Khayyam's quatrains were composed centuries ago, their influence has lingered on to the present day. In his time, Khayyam faced some dogmatism. He posed some universal questions. The Saljuk time turmoil had deep effect on him. He surely had Sufism in his poetry. He was not only a sage and scientist but also a true believer in Islam. The images he has used in his quatrains all belong to the register and literature of the Persian poetry. His poetic diction concerning Sufism, religious matters etc. can be seen in other Iranian poets such as Sa'di, Hafiz, and Ferdowsi as well. Separating him from the monolithic carpet of Persian poetry and attributing western tinges such as hedonism to him is nothing but marring and invalidating this monolithic Persian literature (Foroughi 1370, 28, 29).

Therefore separating him from Persian and Islamic culture leaves a persona strange to the Iranian culture, a persona that will be at the opposite extremity of other Iranian poets. Accordingly, the translators should consider the cultural setting wherein this Persian poet culminated.

Khayyam has used images that are used by other Iranian poets, too. These images are seen at both word level and quatrain level. This creates a problem that relates to the differences between the Eastern and Western perception of the same notion in a quatrain.

The researcher aims to look into the variety of techniques, strategies or any feasible rendition modes that were used by the translators of quatrains. These techniques reveal the level of domestication and foreignization adopted by the translators.

Venuti (1995, 20, 21) contends, “Anglo-American literary history has been for a long time dominated by domesticating strategy” – that recommend fluent translating" in translators’ style. As France (2000, 9) also points out, domestication "has long been, and still remains, an essential criterion for judging the success of a translation". For many British readers, the model of good writing was provided by such works as Fowler’s *Modern English Usage* or *The King’s English*. Those works declared their preference for the familiar over the far-fetched, the concrete over the abstract, the single word over the circumlocution, the short word over the long, Saxon word over the Romance. If one accepted a given stylistic doctrine as possessing general validity, then translations could be all judged by their “conformity to conservative literary taste” (ibid).

In this thesis, I am going to explore the cases of foreignization and domestication in translations of Khayyam's quatrains into English. To achieve this, the fluctuation of domestication and foreignization are traced at both word

level, i.e. diction and sentence level at a quatrain as a whole. Sometimes the choice of special words in English helps the whole quatrain seem more domesticated because these words are tokens of English culture and so domestication. In other times, the words are more tailored according to Persian or even borrowed intact from Persian. This makes the quatrain seem more Persianwise and gives the reader a sense of foreignization. The problem open to research here is, "what are the cases that make these two strategies of domestication and foreignization apparent in quatrains so that though the quatrains have gained great popularity and reception; they still reflect Persian beauties of poetry?", "Are these devices more of diction , i.e. semantic or no syntactic devices are also responsible?" In other words, "Are the images selected at word level, i.e. word image for word image, responsible for these cases or no, substituting a whole quatrain image for an original quatrain image i.e. a subtext for another subtext is also influential?"

Good translations from Persian into English are available. The problem I am going to investigate in this thesis is finding out the extent to which these translations conform to the original. I am also to investigate whether the translators have tried to stick to domestication or foreignization in this trend and whether this trend improves as the deep cultural aspect of the original text is explored and the relation between people and nations heightens through the passage of time.

### **1.3 Significance and Justification of the Study**

The strategies of the translators have been so much effective in the success of the translation and transfer of the concepts of the original. FitzGerald's

translation is a popular masterpiece. On the popularity of Khayyam's quatrains it just suffices to narrate Foroughi (Foroughi et al 1370, 11) that these quatrains have been translated and reprinted so many times in so many languages including:

32 times into English, 160 times into French, 11 times into Urdu, 12 times into German, 8 times into Arabic, 4 times into Turkish and Russian, 2 times into Danish, Swedish, and Armenian.

Due to the claim made by writers as Foroughi mentioned above who testify the popularity of quatrains in so many languages, this research is regarded as an important one since it reviews one of the most popular Iranian masterpieces in the world of literature. The role of domestication and foreignization is of a decisive one here.

Besides this popularity, that testifies the significance of this study, the trend of the world today towards globalization and a world-integrated village renders an importance of investigating into our Persian literary feats. In this integrated world, the culture will be monolithic, composed of different subcultures as a tessellated whole. Persian culture with its rich treasure of poetry should surely do its part and step ahead side by side with other cultures. Researching the level of domestication and foreignization in Khayyam's translations will render a significant part.



## 1.4 Research Questions

In this thesis, the researcher intends to attempt the following questions:

1. Have the translators of Khayyam's quatrains -particularly FitzGerald - conveyed the cultural aspects of the word images found in the original through their translations?
2. Concerning the tessellated image these words together propose in a quatrain, have they rendered a one to one subtext? Or, no, these subtexts rather than being in conformity with the original incline towards the European culture?
3. If there exists a cultural divergence in the images found at word level and quatrain level, what is their nature on the basis of the principles of domestication and foreignization proposed by theorists?

## 1.5 Definition of Key Terms

**A mock-antique language:** A term used by Cohen (1962, 29) which refers to a translator using archaism in his translation without considering the time and the place of the source text. In this way, the translator uses a pseudo-language that seems artificially contrived for the archaism found in the source language. The result is a foreignized target text that seems absurd and just an imitation.

**Call for action:** The term was used by Venuti (1995, 307, 13), for translators to adopt “visible” and “Foreignizing” strategies. By this term Venuti tried to consider copyright for the translator who is usually under the pressure of commission and hegemony.

**Domestication and foreignization:** Hatim defines domestication as a strategy to translation which, in order to combat some of the “alienating” effects of the foreign text, tends to promote a “transparent, fluent style”. Foreignisation is a translation strategy which deliberately breaks target linguistic and cultural conventions by retaining some of the “foreignness” of the source text (Hatim 2001, 46). The German philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher formulated the distinction between the two strategies most emphatically. In his 1813 lecture on the different methods of translation, Schleiermacher argued, “there are only two, either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him” (Schleiermacher 1963, 92). Venuti also terms foreignization as minoritizing or resistance.

**Deforeignization:** This term refers to foreignized words in a target text that lose the color of foreignization. This occurs when the text goes on and the recurrence of the foreignized word increases, then the level of foreignization dwindles away and the word becomes deforeignized.

**Visibility and Invisibility:** Also referred to as transparency, is a term used by Venuti (1995, 1) to describe “the translator’s situation and activity in contemporary Anglo-American culture”. This is interpreted as a writer and reader being in close face-to-face contact with the translator having done a so domesticated translation that leaves the reader and writer together and himself being invisible. This transparency is due to two factors:

1. The translators themselves tend to write fluently so that they themselves become invisible and the readers say, oh, what a good writer!
2. The target community and culture forces the translator to write fluently to satisfy the expectations of the community and become acceptable, the result of

which is translator's invisibility. This is because the work should be transparent enough to show the original writer's personality and intention without the translator's personality and intention meddling. This personality and intention of the writer hidden behind the text is enforcing the view of authorship leaving no place for the translator's personality and view intermingling, what ultimately makes the translation as derivative and of secondary importance without considering authorship for the translator.

The concept of invisibility, which removes the translator as an interface between the source and the target text or between the writer and reader<sup>2</sup>, is hand in hand with the fluctuation toward the two extremes at opposite sides of the following equilibrium, i.e. the source (foreignization) and the target (domestication)

### **Equilibrium1, Domestication:**

**A:** Stext sociocultural setting      **translator invisible**      **B:** Stext demonstrated compatible with the Ttext sociocultural setting with no remnant of the Stext setting (what seems ethnic in sociocultural setting of Ttext)

This equilibrium wherein the translator is invisible and only **A** and **B** as two language texts are visible with one original writer, is in close contact with another equilibrium shared by Venuti and Schleirmacher.

### **Equilibrium2, Foreignization**

**A:** Stext sociocultural setting      **Translator visible**      **B** Stext demonstrated in Ttext compatible and appended with stext sociocultural setting (what seems bizarre in Ttext sociocultural setting)

Notice that in eq. 1 the translator has inclined towards B or Ttext setting so he is **invisible** and the text is *domesticated* while in eq. 2 the translator has inclined towards Stext sociocultural setting so the translator is **visible** and the text is *foreignized*. So many sociocultropolitical factors impel the translator to fluctuate either to the right side or to the left side of this equilibrium acting

some times as the conservative and in other times as a radical. Again, we should say the two factors mentioned above named 1 and 2, i.e. choice of *text* and the *translator's* method are forced to make these two extremes of domestication and foreignization. This domestication can be well found in Anglo-American translations because they are colonialist, see others as inferior, and as Schleiermacher maintains, “leave their own community reader at peace and move the foreign author towards him”. In this way, they domesticate text *and implicitly have prioritized their own sociocultural setting*. Here the method of the *translator* and the choice of the *text* incline towards ones that are flexible enough to lend themselves to this colonial act of domestication.

Postulating the concepts of *domestication* and *foreignization*, Venuti further argues that the Anglo-American translation tradition, in particular, has had a normalizing and naturalizing effect. Such an effect has deprived producers from translated cultures of their voice and culminated in the re-expression of foreign cultural values in terms of what is familiar to the "dominant Western culture." Venuti discusses the linguistic hegemony of English in terms of the *invisibility* of the translator. Invisibility is apparent when translations yield fluent readability and feel like originals rather than translations. Invisibility requires a great deal of manipulation on the part of the translator because: The more “fluent the translation”, the more “invisible” is the translator and, presumably, the more visible is the writer or meaning of the foreign text (Venuti 1995, 2).

Invisible translators, accordingly, produce “*transparent*” translations, which mirror the master discourse of the translating culture. Related to invisibility is the issue of foreignizing which is “a strategic cultural intervention in the current state of world affairs, pitched against the hegemonic