

**Interdisciplinary Studies in the Digital Era:**  
Innovation and Digitization in Language,  
Culture & Communication



**3<sup>RD</sup> - 4<sup>TH</sup>**  
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## **EDITORIAL FOREWORD**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference (LANACOM) is hosted by the College of Language and Communication (CLC) at the Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport (AASTMT), Alexandria HQ. Under the auspices of Prof. Ismail Abdel Ghafar Ismail Farag, President of the Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport, and under the supervision of Prof. Abeer Refky, Dean of the College of Language and Communication, the conference aims to provide a forum for interdisciplinary discussions where national and international researchers, academics, practitioners and educators exchange and share their experience and research skills in such fields as digital media, language and translation, literature, culture, cinema and filmmaking. The conference is held over two days, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of December (Sunday – Monday) 2023 in Abu Kir campus, AASTMT, Alexandria HQ. It includes more than 50 concurrent sessions in which held are panel discussions, paper presentations and workshops. The book of abstracts contains the abstracts and the biographies of the conference keynote speakers and presenters, all arranged in an alphabetical order.

The organizing committee is grateful to the presenters, chairpersons and the students in the CLC, who contributed to the success of the conference. The committee also extends its gratitude to the rest of the presenters and the participants for their valuable contributions to the conference.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

- Christiane Nord
- Charles Forceville
- Andrea Mayr
- John Bateman
- Luise von Flotow
- Howaida Wahby Eraky
- Rana Arafat

### PLENARY PRESENTATIONS

- **Mapping Postmodern Metafictional Textualization: A Semiotic Translational Approach .....** 8  
*Abdullah Sherif*
- **The Unconventional Meets the Visual: Establishing Opposition in *V for Vendetta* ..**27  
*Marwa Mohamed Abd Allah*
- **Dangerous Liaison: Multimodality of Gendered Nationalism in the Subtitling of Abu-Akleh's Docufiction.....** 58  
*Rowan Mohamed Nabil Atta*
- **Role of the Foreign Drama Portrayed on "Netflix" in Forming the Cultural Identity: A Qualitative Study .....** 78  
*Shourouk Adel Abdelkarim*

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### **Christiane Nord**

Christiane Nord graduated as a translator for German, Spanish and English at Heidelberg University. She holds a Ph.D. in Romance Studies, a post-doc qualification for Applied Translation Studies and Translation Pedagogy, and received honorary doctorates from the University of Geneva, Switzerland (2015) and the Universidad de Baja California in Tijuana, Mexico (2017). Involved in translator training since 1967, now professor emerita of the University of Applied Studies, Magdeburg/Germany, research fellow of the University of the Free State at Bloemfontein, South Africa, and visiting professor of several universities in Spain (University of Vigo) and the PR of China (Qingdao, Ti'an, Tienjin). Since her retirement in 2005, invitations to international conferences and short-time teaching appointments by universities and translator training institutions are taking her around the world. She has appr. 260 publications on translation theory, methodology, and pedagogy, including several translations into German, Spanish and English.



### **Charles Forceville**

Charles Forceville researches and teaches in the Media Studies department of University of Amsterdam. Committed to cognitivist, socio-biological, and relevance-theoretic approaches, he works on visual and multimodal discourse in metaphor, narrative, and rhetoric. Media and genres he has published about include advertising, pictograms, comics & cartoons, documentary, animation, and children's picture books. He wrote the monographs *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising* (Routledge 1996) and *Visual and Multimodal Communication: Applying the Relevance Principle* (Oxford University Press 2020), and co-edited *Multimodal Metaphor* (Mouton de Gruyter 2009) with Eduardo Urios-Aparisi, *Creativity and the Agile Mind* (De Gruyter Mouton 2013) with Tony Veale and Kurt Feyaerts, and *Multimodal Argumentation and Rhetoric in Media Genres* (Benjamins 2017) with Assimakis Tseronis.



**Andrea Mayr**

Andrea Mayr is Assistant Professor in Media and Communication in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Zayed University, UAE. She publishes in the fields of multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), with a particular focus on crime and deviance, social exclusion and (digital) media activism, applying critical linguistic as well as ethnographic methods in her work. Her books include *How to do Critical Discourse Analysis* (2023), *Language and Power* (2018), *The Language of Crime and Deviance* (2012), and *Language and Power: An Introduction to Institutional Discourse* (2008). She has also published in a range of leading journals in the field.

**John Bateman**

John Bateman is Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Linguistics and English Departments of the Faculty of Linguistics and Literary Sciences at Bremen University. He received his PhD in Artificial Intelligence from Edinburgh University in 1986. His research areas revolve around multimodal and multilingual semiotic descriptions, functional and computational linguistics, accounts of register, genre, functional variation, and natural language semantics, and formal and linguistic ontologies. He has published widely in all of these areas, including monographs on text generation (1991, Pinter, co-authored with Christian Matthiessen), multimodality and genre (2008, Palgrave), film (2012, Routledge, with Karl-Heinrich Schmidt), text and image (2014, Routledge), and an introduction to multimodality as a new discipline (2017, de Gruyter, with Janina Wildfeuer and Tuomo Hiippala). Recent work focuses specifically on the semiotic foundations of multimodality and the use of empirical methods for their investigation, combining interdisciplinary studies drawing on eye-tracking, brain-imaging and corpus studies.



**Luise von Flotow**

Luise von Flotow has taught Translation Studies at the University of Ottawa in Canada since 1995. Her main research interests lie in the areas of feminist and gender issues in translation, translation as cultural diplomacy, and audio-visual translation. Most recent academic publications include: *The Routledge Handbook on Translation, Feminism and Gender*, eds. Luise von Flotow and Hala Kamal, 2020 and *Translating Women, Different Voices and New Horizons*, eds. Luise von Flotow and Farzaneh Farhazad, Routledge 2017. She is also a literary translator, working from German and French to English. Most recent publications include: *All the World's A Mall*, tr. of Rinny Gremaud's *Un monde en toc* (Seuil 2016), UAlberta Press, 2023; *The World on Your Back*, tr. of Thomas Melle's *Die Welt im Rücken* (2016), Biblioasis Canada, 2023.

**Howaida Wahby Eraky**

Dr. Wahby Eraky is an Assistant Professor and the Director of Intensive English Programs (IEP) with the English Department, School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) at Rutgers, the state University of New Jersey. In addition to teaching, she is leading the IEP to expand the English offerings to international multilingual students within Rutgers University and the outside surrounding community; her team is also taking part in Rutgers' global student recruitment.



**Rana Arafat**

Dr. Rana Arafat is a Lecturer in Digital Journalism at the department of journalism in City, University of London. She holds a PhD degree in journalism and political communication from the Institute of Media and Journalism (IMeG) at Università della Svizzera italiana, Switzerland. She is the recipient of many research awards including the 2022 AEJMC Nafziger-White-Salwen Dissertation Award, the 2022 SGKM Best Dissertation Award by the Swiss Association of Communication and Media Research, and the 2021 Best Dissertation Award presented by the Activism, Communication and Social Justice Division (ACSJ) in the International Communication Association (ICA). Her research agenda focuses on examining activist/advocacy journalism, conflict reporting, and journalism innovations including news gamification and the adoption of automation and AI technologies in newsrooms. She is the current Professional Freedom & Responsibility (PF&R) Chair of the Broadcast and Mobile Journalism (BAMJ) Division in AEJMC.





## PLENARY PRESENTATIONS

### Mapping Postmodern Metafictional Textualization: A Semiotic Translational Approach

<sup>1</sup>Abdullah Sherif, <sup>2</sup>Inas Hussein Hassan, <sup>3</sup>Riham Debian

<sup>1,2</sup>College of Language and Communication (CLC)

Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport (AASTMT)

<sup>3</sup>Institute of Linguistics and Translation, Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University

Email: [abdullahsherif@adj.aast.edu](mailto:abdullahsherif@adj.aast.edu), [inas.hussein@aast.edu](mailto:inas.hussein@aast.edu), [riham.debian@alexu.edu.eg](mailto:riham.debian@alexu.edu.eg)

#### ABSTRACT

Most translation theories attempt to make sense of the translation process and evaluate the product. Such theories consider the cultural, ideological and paratextual dimensions of such issues without taking into consideration how texts represent a translational endeavor through the process of signification. Furthermore, translation studies are geared towards binary norms that engage with the source text and the target text. These are but restrictions of what a sign means in the translational language-game; i.e., semiotic translation. Very few studies tackled semiotic translation until interdisciplinary studies emerged to outscale the binary norms of the text. Signs are dynamic units of meaning that sign-makers create in a given language game. These signs form a network, a rhizome in the Deleuzian & Guattarian sense. This paper examines Danielewski's Novel *House of Leaves* (2000) and Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962). Both are ergodic texts. This means that interpretation requires the reader to engage with the text. With the texts under study, the paper aims to describe how language encodes meaning on a textual level by exhausting the potential of a sign. This paper deals with translation outside binary norms of communication as a process of encoding and recoding through the potential of a sign system. This paper adopts Deleuze & Guattari's rhizome (1987) and semiotic translation (Torres-Martínez 2018) to examine how the text's non-linear modes of signification create meaning and translate sign into signified. The study concludes translation is a retrospective and transgressive semiotic act that requires translators to outscale binary norms in translation as a field.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** *Semiotic Translation, Ergodic Literature, Rhizome, Wittgenstein, Peirce, Deleuze & Guattari*

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Semiotic activity reflects the affordances to render signs. Translation has marginalized the study of semiotics despite being an emergent semiotic activity (Torop 2000). Translation itself is part of the semiotic chain; infinite semiosis. In addition, translation demonstrates the multilayered difference in sign systems manifested in signs. Signs are multifarious dynamic units of meaning. A sign is what it is in its capacity to signify.

The translation of semiotics or multimodality in translation is well-documented (Ventola et al. 2004; Borodo 2016; Kress & Van Leeuwen 2020). Multimodality found its way into translation studies in the forms of film subtitling and dubbing, comic book translation, video game localization and the analysis of multimodal texts. Yet, from a theoretical standpoint, semiotic translation remains a young discipline (Sütiste & Torop 2007).

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<sup>1</sup>This paper is an adaptation of a Masters thesis with the same title, where the author expands on the scope and theoretical implications of the ideas discussed. The thesis is available upon request.

It has already been established that a translation is a form of rewriting or reframing by several scholars (Lefevere 1992; Hermans 2014; Gentzler 2016; Baker 2018). These theories offer extensive analysis regarding the factors affecting the translation of a given text. Even though these theories are descriptive, they focus on the characteristics of the translation's creators and the paratextual factors in play. They do not consider the creation of the sign. This does not stand as a text is a network of textual and paratextual signs, a claim that these approaches acknowledge. A translation is a text, a network of signs, situated in paratextual signs.

The objective of this paper is to apply semiotic translation (Torres-Martínez 2018) to the texts under study and examine how they would be translated as rhizomes (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Furthermore, it examines how the texts convey meaning in the source and target texts. As hypertexts, the texts under study, Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, its translation into Arabic and Danielewski's *House of Leaves* utilize metafiction in their narrative. Lastly, the penultimate objective of this paper is to subvert the binary oppositions entrenched in translation studies in favor of semiotic continuity.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Scholes (1979) sees that fiction is human behavior that changes but the ideas in fiction remain. Metafiction is defined as writing that is self-conscious; it is the study of fiction within fiction that examines the relationship between the author and the reader and fiction and reality. This is done to provide commentary or criticism of fictional texts. It attempts to undermine or move past traditional norms in fiction. This task, in Scholes's evaluation, is only made possible by trespassing and straying from traditional molds of fictional forms.

The subjectivity in the world is put to study in metafictional texts, its construction and how the novel constructs the external world (Waugh 2001). The affordances of signification are put on display as constructed and constructive signs. Therefore, the author of the metafictional novel is dethroned. This means that the author is not a figure withholding a definitive interpretation of the text. Rather, interpretation is up to the reader's process of signification (16).

### **2.1 Hypertextual Postmodern Typography**

Meggs and Purvis (2016) state that postmodern artists sought to create playful and unorganized art that resists clarity and typographic objectivity. Postmodern artists favored obscurity and crammed multiple elements into the canvas, which entailed the need for cohesion, disregarding rules and design norms. For instance, postmodern designers rejected the use of the right angle as a way of organization. To emphasize textual elements on a canvas, they surrounded the text with out-of-place elements, as in wide letters and distinguishable fonts. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of elements, textures, colors and angles enabled them to use collage as a medium for communication as well. Poynor (2003) cites Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) as an example of an author, an illustrator who challenged conventional devices in visual culture. However, Danielewski's works were not only considered postmodern in their subversion of traditional graphic design but also in their narrative employment.

Hypertexts require non-trivial effort to interpret. They are non-linear bodies that reject having a definitive or conclusive interpretation. Therefore, the reader exerts effort to interpret the text and must go through it several times (Aarseth 1997, 2). The exploration of the text makes it more accessible as the reader backtracks in areas already explored to dispel previous ambiguities. Aarseth (1997) states that the reader navigates the world of the text as a player in a game. The reader may explore, discover new areas, get lost and indulge in the blurred

boundaries between text and game (4-5). The text is a machine and the reader is the operator. The operator toys with the machine's pre-existing signs and receives new and transformed signs to operate. Therefore, rather than seeing a text as a series of linear signs, the reader encounters a space where semiotic phenomena take place (21).

Part of hypertextual textualization is fluid traversal through the phenomenal space (Kahn et al. 1995). In a way, hypertextual systems use their encoding links which direct the reader to specific destinations. These links and destinations must have meaningful relationships and must be bidirectional (167). Landow (1991) finds that these links rely on relational thinking in an enjoyable manner. In book forms, Landow (1991) states that books adapted into hypertexts must link previous and following sections to retain the organization of the original text (101).

## 2.2 Rhizomatic Texts

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) state that books are assemblages that relate to other bodies. Such assemblages consist of organs; i.e., signs that refer to other signs within the same assemblages and other bodies but no center point (23). Furthermore, these assemblages function in an interconnected manner and transform with each interaction (4). Binary thought does not apply to these assemblages since they are capable of emergence. Emergence expresses the wider phenomena where its sum possesses or exhibits properties that do not exist as parts. This assemblage is called a rhizome (6). A rhizome, depicted in figure 1, has no beginning, end or center. Yet, it continues to find ways to create new relations and expand. It is heterogeneous and may merge with any entity in its collective consciousness.

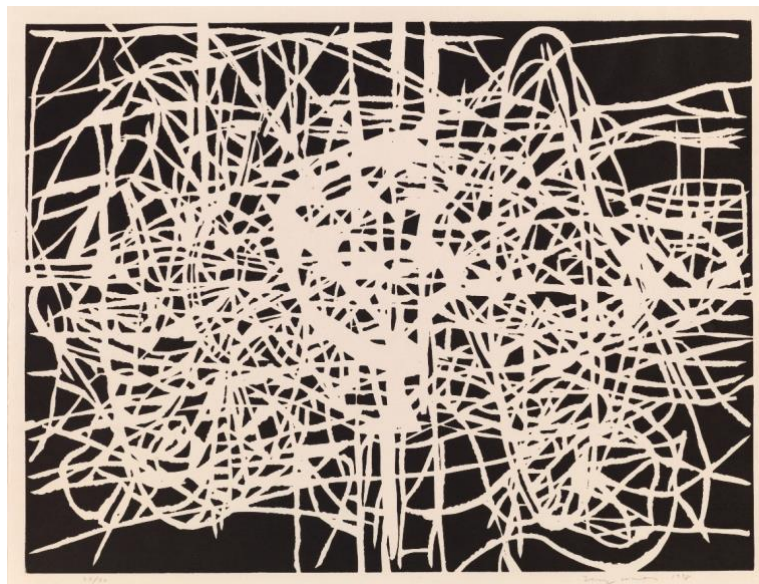


Figure 1 Rhizome (Winter 1998)

As a body of signs, binary relations have no place. Instead, a conceptual space where concepts and phenomena dwell. This allows the translator to draw the text as a map thanks to the rhizomatic nature of hypertexts. Landow (2006) states that hypertexts are rhizomes manifest. A hypertext consists of networks of different areas with no center and no definitive structure that twists itself as the reader maps out its signs (58-60).

A key effort to dissolve this rigidity in translation is the application of semiotics to translation. Translation is, after all, a semiotic act. Jakobson (1959) stated that there are three

types of translation: intralingual translation, interlingual translation and intersemiotic translation. Intralingual translation is the interpretation of signs from and to the same language. Interlingual translation is the translation from one language to another language. Finally, intersemiotic translation is translation from verbal to non-verbal signs. Stecconi (2004) provides several arguments as to why semiotics is good for translation. Semiotics define the image of transfer in translation and give us a new perspective on equivalence and loss. The ‘image’ of transfer does not demonstrate what transfer looks like. Perhaps, it may provide an unobtainable notion of transfer with no loss or alteration. After all, that is much what the notion of equivalence offers, where transfer is reduced to a mathematical formula, where the source text is given a value and the translator attempts to find an equivalent value in the target text. This resonates with Wittgenstein's (2010) critique of pictorial definitions. Pictorial definitions serve to define and use words utilizing ostension; pointing to an object and repeating the object’s name. They create ambiguity about how a concept may function when employed. Furthermore, perfect translation is an impossibility as Stecconi (2004) points out, translation does not say the ‘same thing’. It does, however, say something similar. Therefore, semiotics provides translation scholars with many answers regarding binary topics as in source text and target text, free and literal translation and several other oppositions (315).

### 2.3 Semiosis

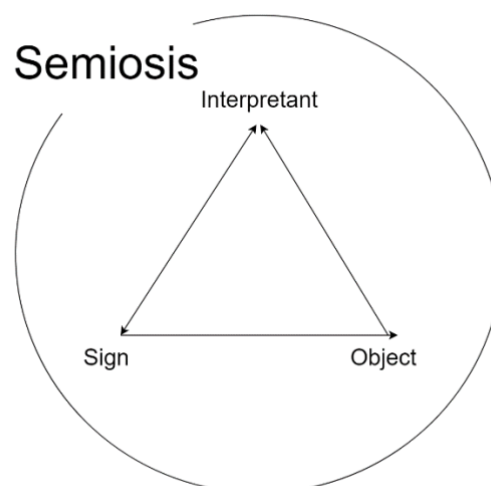


Figure 2 Semiosis

Semiosis is making meaning as seen in figure 2. A sign stands for something else or another sign and is unique from other signs. This may be phonetic, morphological or contextual (CP 7.355-8)<sup>2</sup>. As for the ‘something else’ a sign points to; Pierce called an object. It is a manifestation of its respective sign in some manner (CP 2.228). Lastly, the sign and the object are represented as an interpretant, a connotation set by the sign’s use in context (CP 4.536).

In addition to introducing a triadic model of interpreting signs, Pierce introduced a triadic category of signs, as illustrated in figure 3. Firstly, icons represent themselves by conjuring an immediate image of themselves (CP 4.447). Second, a sign can be an index when it denotes an object without attributing any qualities (CP 3.434). The final piece of the triad is

<sup>2</sup>The works of Charles Sanders Peirce are compiled in *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (1978), divided into 8 volumes. They are cited differently in this paper, where CP stands for “Collected Papers”, followed by the volume number and the section respectively.

a symbol. It may represent a habit, disposition or effect to be interpreted by the context in play (CP 4.447). Savan (1987) sheds light on this triad. He states that icons resemble their objects or the quality of the sign. Icons are in a sense pictorial. Indices relate to a sign and an object that exist or have existed in the past or when a sign and object relate in some manner of action. Finally, signs are symbols when the sign and object are laws, habits or rules.

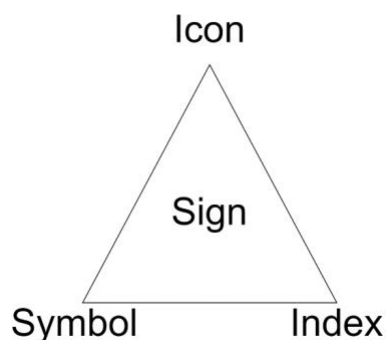


Figure 3 Types of Signs

#### **2.4 Abductive Reasoning**

Abduction examines pre-existing facts and known knowledge to form an argument. It is the culmination of familiar knowledge and the formation of a potential realization (CP 7.128). It is a tool in logic founded on inference from different arguments (CP 6.525). As a tool in logic, abduction presents the interlocutor with the facts as premises for the argument, which in turn paves the path for a proposed conclusion that aligns with the stated facts and explains them (CP 5.144-145). Hence, in the context of this study, translation arises from the observation of phenomena in the source text and transforming these phenomena into the target text.

#### **2.5 Games, families and rules**

The first key concept comes from Wittgenstein (2010) who posits that any game has rules, movement and actions but such concepts cannot be understood just by observing. There must be active participants in this game that has a set of activities enclosed in it. The same applies to language. In their own way, language games shed light on how language is used. However, language-games are not tools for epistemic claims but tools that familiarize us with language use. As Wittgenstein puts it:

Our clear and simple language-games are not preliminary studies for a future regimentation of language as it were, first approximations, ignoring friction and air resistance. Rather, the language-games stand there as objects of comparison which, through similarities and dissimilarities, are meant to throw light on features of our language (56).

Stern (2004) states that language games encourage action and introspection regarding contextual prompts since language games do not offer a totalizing theory of language. If participants change how they use language, the game changes.

In addition to examining language use, Wittgenstein saw that language games allow us to examine the similarities between language games, which he dubbed family resemblances. Take a family whose members have similar features, attributes and so on. These features intertwine. Therefore, language "has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is a family of

structures more or less akin to one another...We're talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, atemporal non-entity" (Wittgenstein 2010, 51). Baker and Hacker (2005) state that family resemblances foreground a network that constitutes a game. It may expand and procreate new family members. It is extendable, or emergent.

In applying a word in a language game, what governs the application of said word? After all, it is not possible to have a game without rules. This brings in the next question: how does one know whether his/her application of a rule is accurate or correct? In reality, the application of a rule, or use of a word does not condition further. For Wittgenstein (2010), "...every action according to a rule is an interpretation" (87). If a reader attempts to force a certain interpretation, or picture, of what a rule would look like in application, such application is unusable and clashes with the actual possible application of a rule. Rules are followed when applied. Baker and Hacker (2009) find that the application of a rule relies on human abilities. In other words, there is an infinite number of ways to follow a rule with an equal number of techniques.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Torres-Martínez (2018) presented his approach to translation as an attempt to surpass the delimitation of signification and foreground the emergent nature of semiosis (353). Torres-Martínez borrows from Wittgenstein and Peirce for an eclectic theoretical framework. He uses Peircean semiotics and abductive reasoning as the foundation for semiotic translation. This translation is governed by Wittgensteinian concepts including rule-following paradox, family resemblances and language games. Semiotic translation offers a novel approach to translation that has a broader view of translation as a field, focusing on the translator's agency. Second, semiotic translation puts the multifarious nature of signs and the interaction of sign systems with each other front and center (353). Third, it aims to undermine equivalence as a standard for good translations and advocate for what Torres-Martínez calls a "correct understanding of a correctly interpreted sign" (380).

The text in translation is a dynamic complex of signs. This means that the translator must first define the semiotic relations within the text (368). The source text exists as spatial phenomena that is networked in terms of signification. It is the translator's task to displace the signs in the source text space into the target text space via abduction that is constrained by rule-following (369-371). Torres-Martínez (2018) states that abduction is a tool that causes a series of informed translational decisions (363-368). Abduction is constrained by Wittgenstein's rule-following. Torres-Martínez finds that abduction creates interconnectedness but also randomness. To constrain the understanding of a sign and ensure a context-driven translation, Torres-Martínez calls this abductive rule-following (371).

While the source text becomes a living ground for semiotic categorization and mapping, the target text becomes what Torres-Martínez calls translational hypothesis (373). A translational hypothesis consists of propositions, containing concatenations of sections. To elaborate, a proposition is a given utterance. A proposition (Px) is divided into sections (Sx) and linked with concatenations (Cx) (375-376). Sections are part of the utterance. Concatenations are concerned with how words or signs are interlinked to encompass the section, where the culmination of each concatenation verifies the whole section. In other words, concatenations are parts that make up the whole. For example, take the utterance 'At last, he spoke his mind because he found the words.' Let this utterance be the source text. This utterance can be divided into parts as in propositions. Each proposition contains sections of the utterance. Each section is defined in semiotic terms and sections are separated with slashes (/).

The formula given can be put as  $P_x=(S_x(C_x))$ , where x stands for the order in which a given proposition, section or concatenation appears. With the utterance and formula, semiotic description may be demonstrated as follows<sup>3</sup>:

P1:

S1: 'At last (icon)' (<C1: 'At,' 'last'>)

P2:

S2: 'he spoke his mind (symbol)' (<C2: 'he,' 'spoke,' 'his,' 'mind'>)

P3:

S3: 'because he found the words (index)'

(<C3: 'because,' 'he,' 'found,' 'the,' 'words'>)

Semiotic description reveals the figurative nature of the utterance. It reveals the loss of expression and its restoration. The image of words as an object lost is exemplified in the use of symbolic signs. On the other hand, the words' shapelessness and elusiveness of the words in the mind of the speaker are unveiled to the speaker. Hence, the translational hypothesis can be rendered as: 'في النهاية، عبر بما في نفسه لأنه أدرك ما رواه من الكلمات'. In addition, the translation hypothesis can be described as follows:

P1:

S1: 'في النهاية (icon)' (<C1: 'في' 'في'>)

P2:

S2: 'نفسه' 'في' 'بما' 'عبر' (<C2: 'عبر' 'بما' 'في' 'نفسه'>)

P3:

S3: 'لأنه أدرك' (symbol) / 'ما رواه من الكلمات' (index)'

(<C3: 'الكلمات' 'من' 'رواه' 'ما' 'أدرك' 'لأنه'>)

Therefore, the translational hypothesis becomes a text that integrates both the source text and the target text. Torres-Martínez's reasoning for this is that translation as a transfer from one language to another, as is commonly known, is abandoned in favor of abductive acts based on informed translation decisions. This is why the translational hypothesis abandons equivalence in its approach. In this manner, the target text integrates elements of the source text into itself that can be traced. This is due to what Torres-Martínez calls semiotic kinship between signs and the source and target texts (373). Torres-Martínez summarizes this as:

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<sup>3</sup> Torres-Martínez used different methods of semiotic descriptions and notations throughout his research on semiotic translation. In his paper *Semiotic Translation* (2018), he divides propositions, concatenations and sections. Subsequent Translations based on this description are called rule-texts; the inferences taken are based on abductive rule-following. Rule-texts are not used in Torres-Martínez later works on semiotic translation but the concept of inference-based translation founded in the abductive rule-following is not abandoned. In addition, his method of description changed over the course of the development of semiotic translation. In another paper titled *A semiotic translation of Paul Celan's Schwarze Flocken and Weggebeizt* (2019), he uses a similar notation system. However, he focuses more on demonstrating semiotic relations, on how different sections are reconstructed in the target text in a "spatial arrangement" (291). By reconstruction, he means the recreation of the reality of human experience via translation semiotics (303). Lastly, in *Translating Wittgenstein: A semiotic translation of the Tractatus* (2020) Torres-Martínez focuses on describing signs in terms of iconicity, indexicality and symbolism. The author of this paper uses a similar formula to the one that appears in Torres-Martínez (2018). Furthermore, the author of this paper uses his own notation system based on Torres-Martínez notations in (2018) and (2020).

Any translation is a proposition. A proposition is a complex. Complexes are true because they exist as facts. Their existence as facts is warranted by our cognitive affordances and not by logical operations (369).

The categorization of signs and defining their relations with each other can be illustrated visually as a rhizome. The maps presented in the analysis focus on three main elements. First, they focus on the narrative's relations signs have with each other. Locating these relations is an exercise of tracing different narrative threads. Second, these maps demonstrate semiotic relations concerning narrative thread in play. Finally, they must allow for multiple entry points. Hence, the map's relations would, visually as well as conceptually, interweave and overlap with each other. This would simulate the translator's active engagement with the texts understudy visually.

The first text understudy is Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962) and its translation نار شاحبة by Muhammad Galid (2021). The text is divided into three parts. The first is a foreword by a fictional academic called Charles Kinbote. The second part is a poem by a fictional poet called John Shade. The third part is a commentary by Charles Kinbote on the poem. The reader tracks the narrative through different parts of the poem indicated by the line number and its corresponding section in the commentary. The novel is playful and is a prime example of early metafiction as the reader travels from the poem to the commentary only to discover Kinbote's self-indulgent and often transgressive interpretation of the poem and Shade. In a way, the reader discovers that Kinbote's commentary says more about him than that of the poem. The reader is promptly forced to reconsider his/her position and the credibility of what s/he reads. Hence, the reader begins solving a puzzle by forming his/her interpretations and assumptions about the text. In addition, Boyd (2001) likened *Pale Fire* to a chess puzzle (Nabokov was a composer of chess puzzles) where:

We make discoveries rapidly, but with each new find we sense there is still more to discover, or our apparent discoveries start to unravel or to suggest something still more important beyond. Suddenly, we hit on one key move, we enter the synthetic phase, we find the solution that transforms the whole novel and its world, and discovery cascades down upon discovery. And even there the magic and the mystery have not reached their end (13).

The second text understudy is *House of Leaves*, a novel by Danielewski released in 2000. It tells two concurrent narratives. The first narrative is about Will Navidson and his family, who record their lives in their house and the tension between Navidson and his wife Karen, titled *The Navidson Record*. The house contains a dark labyrinth that expands even though the house remains the same on the outside. As a filmmaker, Navidson records his ventures in this labyrinth and releases a documentary titled *The Five and Half Minute Hallway*. The second narrative concerns Johnny Truant. Truant receives documents regarding *The Navidson Record* from his recently deceased elderly neighbor Zampanò. *The Navidson Record* is a collection of documents containing the details of Navidson's life during his stay at the house. Truant narratives fluctuate between reality and fiction and blur the line between the present and the past. Both narratives are told in a plethora of ways. As seen in figure 4, the reader is required to track the footnotes at the bottom and side of the page and crosscheck them with their corresponding notations. In addition, the text in the blue squares is sequenced. This means that they carry over from previous pages to the next pages. Hence, the reader must keep track of them. Furthermore, the text enclosed in these squares is mirrored, requiring the reader to use a mirror to read.



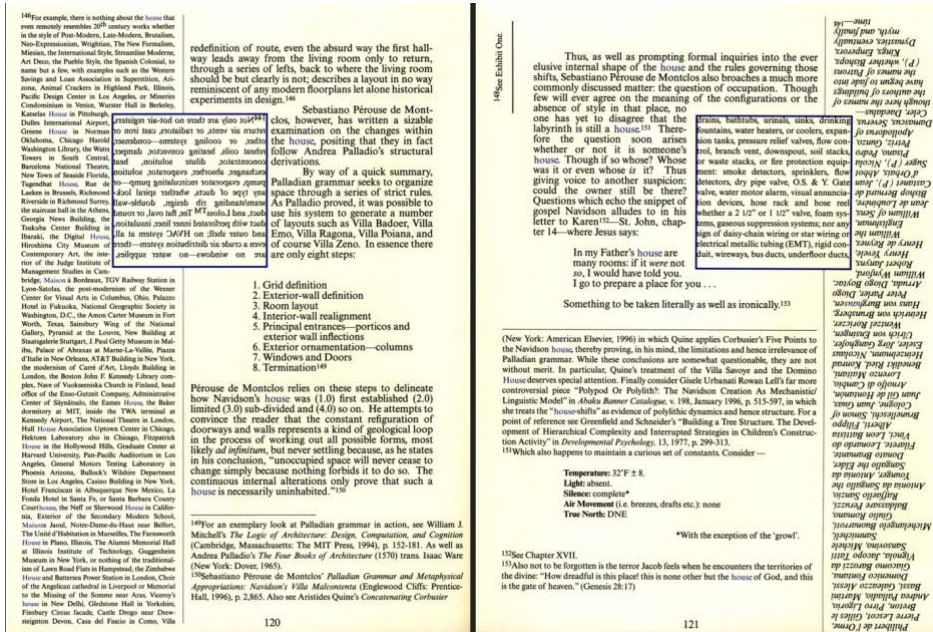


Figure 4 Sample Page Spread

Other parts of the texts require different methods of interpretation such as Morse code, taking the first letter in each word to form a coherent narrative, crosschecking with the appendix and index to see how narratives intertwine and several other methods. The text shifts narrators on the fly and brings in the questions: Who is talking? What is real? Who is the real author? One theory states that Zampanò is the long-lost husband of the late Pelafina, mother of Johnny Truant, and the text is his re-imagining of his lost wife and son. Another theory posits that Pelafina wrote the text during her stay at the asylum and her suicide. There is no definite conclusion of what the text is about.

#### 4. ANALYSIS

The analysis begins by creating a visual map of the narrative relations in each text. This will aid in demonstrating semiotic relations. For this, Draw.io (2023), a software used for diagrams and two-dimensional illustrations shall be used for mapping. While mapping both texts is a lengthy endeavor, this paper shall focus on certain extracts where the translator's required engagement is at its peak. This map is the rhizome of signification; the map that the translator traverses while reading the text.

This section is divided into two parts; one for Pale Fire and its translation into Arabic and the other for House of Leaves. The analysis is divided into two parts. A two-dimensional illustration of narrative and semiotic relations is presented. This serves as the mapped-out rhizome, which shall be grounds for semiotic description as per the given description formula  $Px=(Sx(Cx))$  and notation system.

##### 4.1 Pale Fire

*Pale Fire* stands as one of the prime examples of both hypertexts and metafiction. The analysis does not focus on the foreword, poem or commentary individually. The analysis offers a map depicted in figure 5. It must be made clear here that figure 5 demonstrates relations between the foreword, poem and commentary. It is not a guide to traversing the text, which

would require a thorough treatment<sup>4</sup>. To add, figure 5 does not suggest the existence of a definitive start or end point. In addition, it does not offer a definitive mapping of the text. To claim so would imply that a definitive interpretation exists, which goes against this paper’s premises.

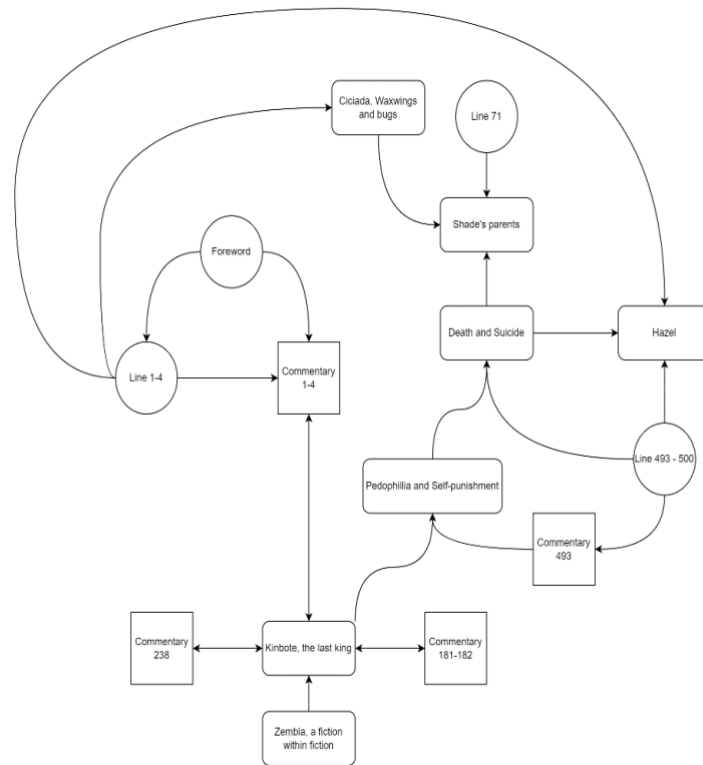


Figure 5 Mapping of *Pale Fire*

“Commentary 1-4” connects with multiple narrative threads, not just based on Kinbote’s referrals but also thematically. Shade’s description throughout the text is a recurring matter. In “Commentary 1-4”, Kinbote describes Shade as “physically unattractive but otherwise beautifully developed lad” (50). This opening invites the reader to know more about Shade. It paints him a picture of death and rebirth. Returning to Kinbote's commentary, the reader realizes that Kinbote has nothing factual to offer about Shade. Turning to "Commentary 1-4", the reader is struck with a fantasized narrative of Shade's childhood. This subjects a reader to three narratives; Shade's poem, which the reader knows little about, Kinbote perverted take on Shade's life and Kinbote's narrative about a fictional kingdom called Zembla. Shade's shapeless form and iconic nature are juxtaposed with Kinbote's concrete and transgressive nature. To the reader, particularly one who has not read the text before, the autobiographical image Shade drew is clear and unobstructed. It paints an image of Shade’s struggle with death in both his personal life. The rereader, on the other hand, draws connections. Kinbote discusses Shade's parents' lives. They were both ornithologists and had interests in waxwings and birds. The false azure is an allusion to his daughter's death (17).

This kind of revisiting of the text shows a key aspect of it that must be rendered in translation; emergence. Emergence in hypertexts means that further engagement with the

<sup>4</sup> For a treatment on *Pale Fire*, see Boyd (2001). In addition, Rowberry (2012) offers a complete map based on: “Kinbote’s links, or forgoing suggested connections to follow one’s own intuition” (5).

labyrinth leads the reader to discoveries in previously visited areas. Since all of the narratives discussed are under Kinbote's control. He makes several connections that are not mentioned in the poem. This encourages the reader to reread the text with introspection and reflect on what is presented. One must do more than examine the references and links that Kinbote makes. He taints Shade's poem with his tale about Zembla and the King. This leads the reader to the conclusion that the entire text is about Kinbote, not Shade or his poem. This appears for the first time in "Commentary 1-4" and resumes through "Commentary 181-182" and "Commentary 238". He states:

Incidentally, it is curious to note that a crested bird called in Zemblan *sampel* ("silktail"); closely resembling a waxwing in shape and shade, is the model of one of the three heraldic creatures (the other two being respectively a reindeer proper and a merman azure, crined or) in the armorial bearings of the Zemblan King, Charles the Beloved (born 1915), whose glorious misfortunes I discussed so often with my friend (Nabokov 1962, 51).

It draws the reader's attention to one of Kinbote's many transgressions from the poem to introduce Zembla. Later in "Commentary 1-4" Kinbote introduces Gradus, the assassin tasked with killing Charles the Beloved. All too quickly, Kinbote diverts the reader from the actual poem and weaves it into his narrative.

The reader notes the abrupt contrast between Shade's poem and Kinbote's commentary. Turning to Kinbote's commentary on each corresponding line of the poem, one finds an odd discussion of Zemblan Christianity and a description of spiritual transition through suicide. The reader, dumbfounded, retraces his/her steps. Kinbote goes on his debate on God with Kinbote in "Commentary 549". Shade is an agonist as Kinbote describes. On the other hand, Kinbote follows his denomination of Christianity which originates from Zembla. While this may, at least in part, explain the reason why Kinbote discusses suicide through the lens of Zemblan Christianity, it does not explain how it relates to Hazel, Shade's daughter who committed suicide, especially because he laments the fact that Shade dedicated a major portion of the poem to her and not his beloved Zembla (144-145). Not much is known about Hazel. Shade does not divulge into her personal life nor detail the reason for her suicide. Instead, he alludes to her image as a ghost or a phantom that haunts him. Furthermore, he mentions how she closely resembled him rather affectionately, even though he mentions that she was not beautiful. The reader learns something new, yet s/he can't help the feeling that something else is in play. What is his connection to Hazel? Why, of all things, does Kinbote identify with Hazel's suicide? Even if such questions are answered, it is immediately followed by more questions. Why did Kinbote, king of Zembla, abandon his kingdom? Why the interest in Shade? What does his relative interest in literature have anything to do with the poem? The reader is overwhelmed but determined to answer all of these questions and weave all narrative threads into a coherent map. Examining the notes on Zembla, the reader uncovers the king's pedophilic nature. This is the reason why he fled Zembla. Hints of pedophilia are common in Kinbote's tales of Zembla, as in: "...the old groom, who has a way of fondling him whenever nobody is around" (201). The reader is still dumbfounded but pushes onwards to "Commentary 493". He states:

The more lucid and overwhelming one's belief in Providence, the greater the temptation to get it over with, this business of life, but the greater too one's fear of the terrible sin implicit in self-destruction... If I were a poet I would certainly make an ode to the sweet urge to close one's eyes and surrender utterly unto the perfect safety of woody death... So what can stop one from effecting the transition? What can help us to resist the intolerable temptation? What can prevent us from yielding to the burning desire for merging in God? (Nabokov 1962, 200-203).

To the reader who is exploring the text for the first time, the signs in this extract may be semiotically described as follows:

P1:

S1: 'The more lucid and overwhelming one's belief (Icon) / the greater the temptation (Icon) / the greater too one's fear (Symbol)'

(<C1: 'The', 'more', 'lucid', 'and', 'overwhelming', 'one's', 'belief' / 'the', 'greater', 'the', 'temptation' / 'the', 'greater', 'too', 'one's', 'fear'>)

P2:

S2: 'the sweet urge (Icon) / 'the perfect safety (Index)'

(<C2: 'the', 'sweet', 'urge' / 'the', 'perfect', 'safety'>)

The signs in S1 directly hark at Kinbote's faith in Zemblan Christianity and the signs in S2 point to Kinbote's suicidal ideations, or romanticization of suicide. This juxtaposition between suicidal ideation and fear of God confuses the reader. At face value, Kinbote's discussion of suicide is nonsensical, unless it foretells something that is yet to be. The reader follows Kinbote's thread discussing suicide and, though not stated, concludes that suicide was Kinbote's demise. Kinbote's identification with Hazel in death is made clear; he respects her will to prefer "the beauty of death to the ugliness of life" (296). This revelation is not possible without returning to previously visited sections in the text. From this point, the reader begins to form even more links that were previously not possible. The reader understands that Kinbote's suicidal ideations do not only refer to a simple will to get it over with but also as a method to escape his assassin and as a form of self-punishment. Therefore, the reader reenters the labyrinth with this newly found knowledge and the signs that s/he once inspected begin to transform. The previous semiotic description takes the following form:

P3:

S3: 'The more lucid and overwhelming one's belief (Symbol) / the greater the temptation (Icon) / the greater too one's fear (Symbol)'

(<C3: 'The', 'more', 'lucid', 'and', 'overwhelming', 'one's', 'belief' / 'the', 'greater', 'the', 'temptation' / 'the', 'greater', 'too', 'one's', 'fear'>)

P4:

S4: 'the sweet urge (Symbol) / 'the perfect safety (Symbol)'

(<C4: 'the', 'sweet', 'urge' / 'the', 'perfect', 'safety'>)

The signs in S3 and S4 no longer associate with faith. Instead, they directly point to Kinbote's desire to escape his assassin and a desire to punish himself for his pedophilic crimes. His association with perfect safety is death, the farthest place from life's hardships. The translator offers the following translation:

كلما انجلي إيمان المرء بالعناية الإلهية وصار غامراً، زادت غواية تجاوزه، بحكاية الحياة هذه، وعظم أيضاً  
خوفه من الخطيئة الرهيبة التي يضمها تدمير الذات... لو كنتُ شاعراً، لنظمت قصيدة تتغنى بالرغبة العذبة في  
إغماض العينين، ولاستسلمت كلية لسكينة الموت المنشود المثالية... إذا ما الذي يمنع المرء من تحقيق الانتقال؟  
ما الذي يمكن أن يساعدنا على مقاومة الغواية الشديدة؟ ما الذي قد يمنعنا من الانقياد للرغبة الحارقة في الاتحاد  
بالرب؟ (Nabokov 2021, 221-224)

The signs engendered in the translation, closely, follows the multifaceted nature in the original text. These signs may be described as follows:

P1:

S1: عظم أيضاً خوفه / زادت غواية تجاوزه (Index) / كلما انجلى إيمان المرء بالعناية الإلهية (Symbol) (Symbol)

(<C1: 'خوفه', 'أيضاً', 'عظم' / 'تجاوزه', 'غواية', 'زادت' / 'الإلهية', 'بالعناية', 'المرء', 'إيمان', 'انجلى', '>كلما

P2:

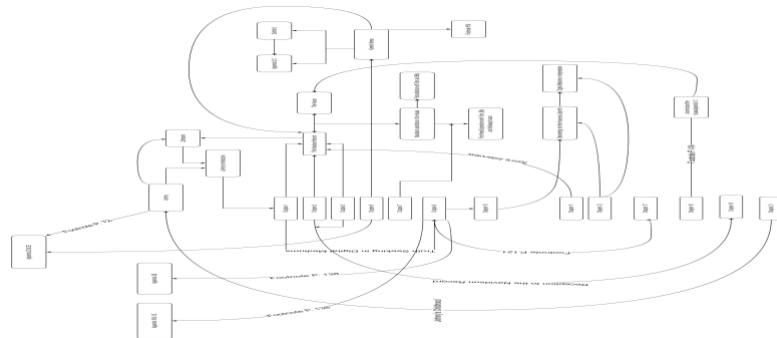
S2: لسكينة الموت المنشود المثالية (Symbol) / الرغبة العذبة (Symbol)

(<C2: 'المثالية', 'المنشود', 'الموت', 'السكينة' / 'العذبة', 'الرغبة', >)

This transformation of signs is the product of inspecting previously revisited areas in the labyrinth. Just as metafictional texts dethrone the author in favor of a reader-centric interpretation, the reader dethrones Kinbote as a narrator. The text becomes a live labyrinth, an emergent machine capable of producing numerous interpretations at the operator's desire. This is not lost on the translator. The translator, with the knowledge obtained from his abductive inferences, weaves his map in the shape of the target text. This text is a labyrinth in its own right. It is also an offspring of the original labyrinth, one that not only bears the name of the original but also exhibits a form of familial resemblance in the form of semiotic kinship. The path the reader takes in the target text is similar but not identical to the source text.

#### 4.2 The labyrinth in *House of Leaves*

*House of Leaves* does not only claim to be hypertext but a prototype of digital texts. At the time of its release, the internet was still in its infancy. As a product of its time, the text illustrates how digital space, or more accurately cyberspace<sup>5</sup>, shall be used as the internet develops. Attempting to put a definitive map or a linear network is a reductionist approach. The labyrinth must serve several readings and allow the reader to survey other readings since *House of Leaves* toys with the reader, demanding him/her to reconsider where his/her position leads. The reader is like Navidson, moving in the darkness of an ever-shifting labyrinth. Figure 6 offers a partial mapping of the text.



<sup>5</sup> The term cyberspace was first introduced in 1982 by science fiction author William Gibson. It refers to an artificial computer-generated reality. It is a place where people interact virtually with each other and with virtual landmarks. It is place that generated as a product of human intervention as well. As the internet developed and gained social and academic interest, the term cyberspace referred to the internet as a means of networking on a digitized space. This space is dynamic with interconnected systems within the digital space and the real world (Fourkas, 2004).

### Figure 6 Mapping of *House of Leaves*

In chapters 10, 11 & 12, the overall textualization of the text alters as Navidson's party descends the house. They enter a place where traditional laws of space do not apply in the house's labyrinth. Chapter 5 goes into greater detail regarding the use of space, where space is bound by sound. The house, as an ever-expanding labyrinth, demonstrates the “interplay between sound and interior design” (49). For sound to return to its producer requires it to bounce off objects. If no objects exist, then an echo would take place. If no echo exists, then the designed interior is hollow. The study of sound in the house is an allegory of a labyrinth that exists in cyberspace. The reason for this is twofold. First, the text emphasizes how the house as a labyrinth has no center or landmarks. This is evident in a footnote the text cites from Derrida's commentary regarding the function of a center point. The center point offers balance and grounding for the orientation of the various elements in play (112). However, the house defies such notion as the further Navidson and his party descend into it, the worse their predicament becomes (115). Second, the text offers critique and commentary on *The Navidson Record* in a metafictional manner. As a fictional documentary, *The Five and Half Minute Hallway* received substantial commentary from academics and the media as an electronic medium. While critically acclaimed by media outlets, it has been criticized by academics for its ability to falsify images and create fabrications (146-148). This fictional commentary on a fictional documentary, *The Five and Half Minute Hallway*, enclosed within fabricated documents, *The Navidson Record*, in a work of fiction, *House of Leaves*, serves as a simulation of academic and media engagement with digital texts. Therefore, one may conclude that *House of Leaves* was ahead of its time when it comes to digital texts and the future of the internet as cyberspace. This must be reflected in the translation. It has already been established that translation is a context-driven act called abductive rule-following. Therefore, the translation must reflect the text as a labyrinth, allow for multiple interpretations and maintain its metafictional nature. The following extract, which has Navidson and one of his party members Reston descending further into the house, can be taken as an example:

As Navidson and Reston head out into the labyrinth, they occasionally come upon pieces of neon marker and shreds of various types of fishing line. Not even multi-strand steel seems immune to the diminishing effects of that place. “It looks like its impossible to leave a lasting trace here,” Navidson observes (p. 162).

On the one hand, this extract may seem to be an allegory of the tense relations between Navidson and Karen. This is a valid reading. After all, one of the premises of this text is that multiple interpretations apply.<sup>6</sup> Returning to the extract, the extract stands on its own on a blank page. The pages that precede it and the ones that follow are of similar design. As Navidson and Reston continue, the text on each page becomes sparser; forcing the reader to connect the dots between pages. It is this definition of space that must be rendered in translation. In *House of Leaves*, traditional typographical conventions are violated, subverted and redefined to immerse the reader in a textual labyrinth. The translation of the word ‘labyrinth’ must reflect this nature as well. Extract 1 may be described in semiotic terms as follows:

P<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>6</sup> In chapter 5, a quote stands “And where there is no Echo there is no description of space or love. There is only silence” (50). This is one of many allusions to Navidson's tense relations with his wife Karen and their loveless marriage. In addition, Johnny comments that there is more to the discussion surrounding light, sound, space and echo before he is interrupted. It is then the reader's task to untangle the knot presented; to succeed where Johnny failed.

S<sup>1</sup>: 'As Navidson and Reston head out (Icon) / into the labyrinth (Index)'

(<C<sup>1</sup>: 'As,' 'Navidson,' 'and,' 'Reston,' 'head,' 'out,' 'into,' 'the,' 'labyrinth'>)

P<sup>2</sup>:

S<sup>2</sup>:

'Not even a multi-strand steel (Icon) / seems immune to the diminishing effects (Symbol) / of that place (Index)'

(<C<sup>2</sup>: 'Not,' 'even,' 'multi-strand,' 'steel,' 'seems,' 'immune,' 'to,' 'the,' 'diminishing,' 'effects,' 'of,' 'that,' 'place'>)

A suggested translation is as follows:

أثناء استكشاف نافيدسون وريستون لقصر التيه، لاحظا علامات نيون منثورة وأنواع عديدة من خيوط صنارة ممزقة، يبدو أنه لا يوجد أي شيء محصن من التلاشي في ذلك القصر، حتى صنارة مصنوعة من الفولاذ ومتعددة الجداول. "من المستحيل ترك أي أثر دائم هنا" علق نافيدسون.

P<sup>1</sup>:

S<sup>1</sup>: 'أثناء استكشاف نافيدسون وريستون (Icon) / لقصر التيه (Index)'

(<C<sup>1</sup>: 'أثناء,' 'استكشاف,' 'نافيدسون,' 'وريستون,' 'لقصر,' 'التيه,' 'من,' 'محصن,' 'من,' 'التلاشي,' 'في,' 'ذلك,' 'القصر,' 'حتى,' 'صنارة,' 'مصنوعة,' 'من,' 'الفولاذ,' 'ومتعددة,' 'الجدائل.' 'من المستحيل ترك أي أثر دائم هنا' علق نافيدسون.>)

P<sup>2</sup>:

S<sup>2</sup>: 'في ذلك القصر (Index) / أنه لا يوجد أي شيء محصن من التلاشي (Symbol) يبدو:

(>'القصر,' 'ذلك,' 'في,' 'التلاشي,' 'من,' 'محصن,' 'شيء,' 'أي,' 'يوجد,' 'لا,' 'أنه,' 'يبدو':<C<sup>2</sup>:>)

The house as a labyrinth is everchanging and is consistently juxtaposed with the outside world. It is a place that can be entered with ease. However, it is also a place that operates by its own rules. The translation of 'labyrinth'. A linguistic translation would simply translate it as 'متاهة', which translates back into a maze. While the house is maze-like, it is far from it. A maze is constant, unchanging and has a specific ending. The translation has to convey the connotations of change as life in the house and loss in space as Navidson and Reston lose their way. One possible translation is 'تبه'. While this translates back to 'labyrinth' as a noun and 'lose the way' as a verb, it also connotes wilderness, confusion or arrogance. To bring the translation closer to what the house embodies, 'labyrinth' may be translated as 'قصر التيه'.

## 5. FINDINGS

Semiotic translation revealed that translation is not a constrained act; the translator is not following conditions to what is perceived as a satisfactory translation, self-imposed or otherwise. It is a transgressive act that defiles traditional translational conventions, binary oppositions and equivalence. Translation is not concerned with a one-to-one transfer of a picture, in the Wittgensteinian sense as elaborated in the second chapter. For this no such thing as an ideal sign. The translator does not follow a prime meridian in mapping the text.

The mapping of the hypertexts understudy unveiled a multitude of ways signification occurs. This is apparent on several levels. First, it is manifested in the metafictional voices found in the texts understudy. The numerous narrators in the text's understudy encouraged the reader to question what is presented. Second, by their nature, hypertexts demand retrospection. This requires the reader to go back and forth from one part of the textual labyrinth to the other and revisit previously explored areas. Third, the playful nature of the texts' typographical features

demands the reader resign from any expectations of traditional typography. Finally, the mapping revealed that translation is not the import of signs from one map to the other but the metamorphosis of a body from one semiotic system to the other creating an offspring, where the offspring is not identical to the parent but bears several resemblances to the original. These resemblances, once again, do not attempt to mimic the original. As mentioned, the translator does not follow a prime meridian for the translation. How far the resemblances embody or deviate from the original is a matter that concerns itself with translation theories that operate within binary norms to reveal the discrepancies between the source and target texts. On the other hand, semiotic translation demonstrates that semiosis is an unpredictable spatial phenomenon, undermining traditional binary paradigms.

While the texts understudy offer much in terms of semiotic phenomena, the analysis in this paper confined itself to only select portions. This is partially due to space limitations and the size of the maps present. A full mapping of both texts would require a separate treatise. In addition, the maps offered are based on the researcher's interpretation and exploration of the texts. This is significant because as with traditional cartography, mapping is a subjective process where the cartographer chooses which parts to foreground and which to background. In addition, a cartographer chooses how much space is dedicated to a certain phenomenon as well as their relationship with other phenomena.

Another limitation is based on the scope of the maps offered. Mapping did not include paratextual material referenced in the texts understudy. For instance, *House of Leaves* exhibits several forms of intertextuality. For example, it borrows directly from the works of Jacques Derrida and Martin Heidegger. The map enclosed in this paper does not discuss such paratextual relations. In addition, it does not discuss what the researcher would describe as fabricated intertextuality, where the reader finds fabricated quotes, extracts or references from fictional or real authors. For instance, the text offers fabricated quotations regarding *The Davidson Record* from the likes of Camille Paglia, Harold Bloom and Steven King. None of these are explored in this paper.

The last limitation is concerned use of only one semiotic triad from Pierce. The triad focused on signs as icons, indices and symbols. The consequences for this are significant; a sign may be an icon. However, it may not be a pure icon. Pierce offered several subcategories and several types of signs. For instance, a sign may be a qualisign, sinsign, legisign, dynamic or immediate objects, etc... The point the analysis does not exhaust Pierce's full semiotic typology and the consequences of its usage in the analysis.

## 6. CONCLUSION

For further research, textual mapping and semiotic description must be used as a translational approach. In the analysis in the previous chapter, textual mapping and semiotic description unveiled a series of semiotic relations and transformations that were not apparent before. In addition, it offers a non-linear approach to translation where the translator is at the center of semiosis. The text is a machine and the translator becomes the operator.

The second recommendation goes hand in hand with the first. Signs exhibit a form of kinship between each other. This means that signs in the source text resemble the ones in the target text. However, the researcher rejects the terms source and target as they reinforce the perception of reductionist binary texts. Instead, the researcher offers the terms parent and offspring, for source and target respectively, to indicate a form of continuity and familial



resemblance. Both the parent and offspring exist in the same space where they are semiotic phenomena. This space is a rhizome of signs.

The third and penultimate aim of this paper lies in the realignment of translation studies away from binary oppositions. Translation studies must examine a world where translation is a translator-situated activity away from binary relations and equivalences, where the process of signification is the object of study. Translation would be examined as a space, where theory and practice, parent and offspring, concepts and phenomena are all parts of the same rhizome or body. This body grows and changes as signs alter, evolve, merge, diverge and transform.

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**The Unconventional Meets the Visual: Establishing Opposition in *V for Vendetta***  
Marwa Mohamed Abd Allah, Marwa M. Khamis El-Zouka, Shadia El-Sousy, Abeer M.  
Refky M. Seddek

College of Language and Communication (CLC)  
Arab Academy for Science, technology, and Maritime Transport

Email: [marwaabdallah@aast.edu](mailto:marwaabdallah@aast.edu) , [m.khamis@alexu.edu.eg](mailto:m.khamis@alexu.edu.eg), [shadia.elsoussi@bibalex.org](mailto:shadia.elsoussi@bibalex.org),  
[dr.abeer.refky@aast.edu](mailto:dr.abeer.refky@aast.edu)

## ABSTRACT

The study at hand attempts to distil and examine how oppositions of oppression vs. freedom, status quo vs. revolution, and the oppressor vs the oppressed are realised and represented via linguistic and visual means in two speeches in the dystopian sci-fi film *V for Vendetta*. The frameworks employed are Jeffries' (2014) model for constructing opposition and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework of multimodal analysis. The current study seeks to unravel how the utilisation of some structural and lexical triggers of opposition, in conjunction with the co-deployment of various visual means and resources, contributes to the realisation of the oppositions examined. The study is qualitative in nature, and the researcher provides some examples of structural and lexical instances, along with screenshots of frames highlighting and manifesting the multi-faceted angles of the oppositions under investigation. Unconventional opposites and visual means and resources can be creatively and purposefully used in tandem to construct binaries and dichotomies that critique or expose certain ideological underpinnings, let alone express socio-political leanings and standpoints. The characters and entities embodying these ideologies and oppositions are, therefore, depicted in a favourable or negative light, hence influencing the viewers' stance towards them.

**Keywords:** *Discourse of Opposition; Dystopian Science Fiction; Multimodal Analysis*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Fear propels writers and filmmakers to imagine, speculate, and ponder the qualms of contemporary existence, how far extremes could go wrong, and what the repercussions or resultant adversities are (Sontage 2007). Via capitalising on the powerful impact of the image and utilising the creative parameters of fantasy, filmmakers use dystopian science fiction films to project alternative constructions of reality, expose and critique certain entrenched conventions and codes, and express concerns and anxieties over where society is headed or where society is already at (Ryan & Kellner 2007). The intent is to bring about debate and initiate conversation regarding current socio-political reality, not only imagined future (Cornea 2007). Science fiction films bring the clashes between societally, culturally, and politically entrenched dogmas and codes, along with their impact on collective and individual identities and agency, to the forefront (Cornea 2007).

Dystopian sci-fi film is a reactionary reflective springboard that helped filmmakers denounce the sprawling, deplorable reality of industrialisation and technological advancement, assess and resent the rise of socio-political or economic ideologies, systems, and movements that could potentially shackle individualistic empowerment, equality, and freedom, or bind them to the tyranny of state intrusiveness or any sort of rational conformity, be it Nazism, socialism, capitalism, patriarchy, or conservatism, to mention a few (Halper & Muzzios 2007; Ryan & Kellner 2007).

The city is usually the playground for that ideological combat; it is either hinged upon chaos, anarchy, and disorder that culminate in an utterly deteriorating state of insecurity, or derailed by a strict, often distorted, sense of security that presumably engenders comprehensive order and stability (Halper & Muzzio 2007). Both representations are constructed filmically to delineate the grave consequences of creating a consensus that stabilises the supremacy of an authoritarian figure, system of government, or regime (Sontage 2007). These two broad representations subsume strands such as the postmodern city. The postmodern city is most prominently exemplified by *The Matrix Trilogy*, showing the city engulfed in the throes of a virtual tyrannical reality that enslaves humans, and a protagonist who endeavours to free humanity from the oppression of both the virtual and the real realities (Halper & Muzzio 2007). Since they are essentially about disaster, dystopian science fiction films deconstruct the notion of cities as sites of attractions, excitement, and liberation and portray them as loci for frustration, temptations, crime, poverty, and corruption (Halper & Muzzio 2007).

The Wachowskis', the writers and producers of *V for Vendetta*, along with director James McTeigue, agenda was to criticise Bush's administration's policies on civil liberties and anti-terrorism measures following 9/11. The film creates a dystopian fascist version of England where difference is deemed dangerous and where voices of opposition are detained and tortured to maintain national security. The film mirrors a number of the measures adopted by the Bush administration to fight terrorism, such as unwarranted search and seizure, concentration camps, torture at secret CIA prisons and Abu Gharib, and phone tapping (Keller 2008).

Research tackling dystopian science fiction film or television has touched upon issues like the representation of identity and community in American science fiction post-9/11 (Burns 2014), the alien vs. human dichotomy (Cavedo 2010), the construction of time, place, and society in American dystopia (Khalil 2020), representation of motherhood and nature (Jacobo 2019), post-humanism as a dystopian enclave in cyber-punk and post cyber-punk science fiction (Kriek 2018), African dystopia (Kumbalonah 2015; Lempert 2014), and representation of science and scientists (Weingart, Muhl & Pansegrau 2003). Apart from Khalil (2020), who uses deixis to examine the representation of time, place, and society in American dystopia, a growing body of literature pertaining to science fiction film relies on critical theory, film theory, cultural studies, literary theory, and narrative theory to investigate and explore certain themes, motifs, concepts, plot lines, characters, etc.

The significance of the present study derives from the fact that it attempts to examine how oppositions of suppression vs. freedom, status quo vs. revolution, and the oppressor vs. the oppressed are constructed and represented linguistically and visually via utilising Jeffries' (2014) model for constructing opposition, a framework that, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, has been hardly used to address unconventional construction of oppositions in video production and film and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework of multimodal analysis.

The study at hand attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How does the use of structural and lexical triggers contribute to establishing the oppositions examined in *V for Vendetta*?
2. How does the co-deployment of visual means and resources contribute to establishing the oppositions examined in *V for Vendetta*?
3. How does the interaction of linguistic and visual modes help establish and represent the oppositions examined in *V for Vendetta*?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Multimodal Research on Dynamic Texts

The existing body of multimodal research on dynamic texts demonstrates four areas where the locus of analysis centers on representation of identity, impacting the viewer, and the organisation of semiotic modes and means to communicate certain meanings.

#### 2.1.1 Representation of Identity

A study by Piazza (2010) examines the dialogue and elements of *mise-en-scene* in a short film called *When Love Fails*. The film revolves around women recollecting their experience with suicide and projecting their identity. The stories are introduced and interviewed by a male voice-over and an invisible male journalist, respectively. Some women are in control of their narratives, which is a sign of their agency, while others are rather influenced by how the male interviewer controls the narrative. Costumes exhibit contrast between some women's past and their present. The two women in control of their narrative do not change their outfit, as if they are trying to integrate their past into their present and accept it. According to Piazza (2010), the use of a male voice-over, the presence of an invisible male interviewer, and the presence of female narrators deem the film a space where negotiation of power takes place. Some women have limited words and repeat the same words and syntax used in the questions, thereby displaying limited authority over their narrative. They are seen from the back or the side, which creates distance and detachment from the viewer. In these cases, the male voice-over comments on as well as evaluates the narratives. The two women, on the other hand, challenge the questions of the interviewer and use first-person pronouns, and the camera follows them whenever they move, thus remaining in control of their stories.

McVee and Carse (2016) analyse a political advertisement entitled "The Chinese Professor;" it is set in the future where a fictional Chinese professor delivers a lecture about the downfall of the U.S. Visual means like image, colour, and camera angles, along with the Chinese language, the professor's posture and gestures construct the U.S. as a nation on the brink of failing. Viewers see images of past falling empires juxtaposed with contemporary icons that represent the U.S. system, like the American flag and the U.S. Capitol building. American viewers are positioned as the *Other*, i.e., as outsiders, whereas the Chinese are positioned as the group possessing power. Multimodal analysis of the Chinese Professor reveals the complex relationship between China and the U.S., characterised by animosity and fear, and positions China as the nation with the upper hand economically, thereby consolidating that the production of semiotic modes, or multimodal texts in general, is governed by the socio-political ideologies within which they are created.

Via carrying out critical multimodal discourse analyses, El Falaky (2017) examines the representation of identity in three sets of Arab video games, Egyptian, Iraqi, and Syrian. She stresses that video games' content can be exploited to convey ideologies and values and reflect power relations. El Falaky (2017) selects games that reflect and expose Arab social conditions as well as feature famous characters. Egyptian games contain colloquial language, images of outlaws fighting the police, and songs that reveal poor social conditions as well as the desire to overcome social inequality and poverty. The Iraqi games utilise songs to highlight bravery, patriotism, and solidarity of the Iraqi people in their fight with the terrorist group ISIS, in addition to images that exhibit and reveal poor social conditions. From El Falaky's (2017) viewpoint, Iraqi games are reflective of socio-political conditions and how their ramifications

influence the portrayal of the Iraqi people. Similarly, Syrians are depicted as patriotic, fighting the terrorist group ISIS and opposing Bashar El-Asad's tyranny. El Falaky (2017) contends that the discourse of the video games analysed echoes and mirrors Arab reality, which is rife with ideological conflicts and social problems, and that these games attempt to arouse feelings of empathy for these conflicts. The games convey positive and negative values and attitudes, yet situate them in a socio-political context so as to justify their presence. She concludes by maintaining that verbal, visual, and auditory features of video games are not randomly designed.

Acosta (2018) explores how Childish Gambino's music video *This is America* utilises semiotic modes to represent and promote a certain image of African Americans and gun control in the United States, on the one hand, and impact the audience, on the other. Acosta (2018) uses CDA, systemic functional linguistics, and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework of multimodal analysis to explore issues of power, inequality, and stereotyping. Acosta (2018) also contends that some texts can be seen as acts of resistance because their creators use them to express views and offer critique regarding socio-political or cultural issues. Acosta's (2018) study provides a detailed linguistic analysis of interpersonal, ideational, and textual metafunctions. Gambino acknowledges the presence of the viewers, and directs his gaze towards them. Close-up shots are used more often to create immediacy. Body language is employed to convey how African Americans are presented by the media. Acosta (2018) maintains that the video critiques the negative way mass media and American society view African Americans and sheds light on their apathy and lack of action towards gun control.

Mordecai (2023) analyses ten TikTok videos by focusing on socio-technical features and affordances of visibility, editability, persistence, and association developed by Treem and Leonardo (2012) and affordance coding established by Hautea et al. (2021). Mordecai (2023) sheds light on how TikTok can be used to discuss ideas about serious issues related to mental health, create communities that give a voice to its members to share their experiences, narrate their struggles, and educate individuals on the matters of mental health disorders and coping strategies.

### **2.1.2 Impacting the Viewer**

Li (2016) examines how interpersonal meaning is constructed and communicated in a Coca-Cola ad via modes of speech, colour, image, sound, and body movement. Many young people of white and dark complexion sing together in harmony with a background of green and blue colours to instil feelings of peace and serenity. Such choices arouse the viewer's interest and render the product of the company more appealing. Viewers are positioned to look from a frontal angle in order to feel more involved with the world depicted on the screen. Close-up shots are utilised to construct a close relationship between the viewer and the participants in the ad. The participants in the ad move forward towards the viewer, looking him in the eye and smiling with open arms, inviting feelings of involvement on the part of the viewer and confidence in the product. According to Li (2016), a variety of modes can be utilised in TV advertisements to affect, engage, and appeal to the viewer to build confidence in the product and get him to eventually buy it.

Hu and Luo (2018) maintain that multimodal analysis of Tmall's *Double Eleven* advertisement of a very famous Chinese shopping carnival fulfils the purposes of promoting the culture of the festival and triggering consumption. The use of vibrant colours, joyful body language and gestures, coupled with close to medium shots, creates a closer bond and an

immersive experience that engages the viewer and propels him to participate in the carnival. The represented participants are positioned in the centre of the images to emphasise the role of the general public in the success of the carnival. Hu and Luo (2016) state that Tmall's *Double Eleven* ad succeeds in attracting consumers' attention and persuading them to participate in the carnival.

Similarly, Yao and Zhuo's (2018) study also pinpoints the importance of multimodal analysis of a promotional advertisement to engage the viewer, construct, and communicate a glorified, unique image of the city of Hangzhou, which, in turn, contributes to marketing the city. Close-ups and frontal angles are used throughout the video to engage the viewer. Participants direct their gaze to the viewers to create a close relationship with them. Images of ancient architecture, cuisine, industrial buildings in harmony with people of different ages and ethnicities are presented. Shots are at eye level to create a relationship of equality between the participants and the viewers. A variety of vibrant colours are used to appeal to the viewer's senses. Local music tunes play in the background, and traditional Chinese music instruments are shown as a means to reflect the unique cultural backdrop of the city, engage the viewer, and arouse his interest in such music. Yao and Zhuo (2018) deem the synergy of audio and visual modes effective, as they collaborate to communicate a beautiful image of the city of Hangzhou, not to mention engage and align the viewers.

### **2.1.3 Constructing and Communicating Intended Meaning**

Iedema's (2001) study asserts that semiotic modes are always exploited in film or television to construct as well as represent participants and reality in a way that enhances a certain point of view, communicates an underlying message, or serves a specific interest. Iedema (2001) remarks, while analysing a documentary called *Hospital: an Unhealthy Business*, that there is a clear difference between how clinicians and administrators are represented visually. Clinicians are positioned in a favourable light: intimate, social, and dynamic, whereas administrators are positioned in a negative light: distant, isolated, and static. Clinicians occupy the left on-screen space to show that they are always there, while administrators are always on the right to show that they are replaceable. They are never shown together in any shot. Clinicians are always closer to the camera; the camera follows them around the hospital, while administrators are shown in long shots, not looking at the camera. Hand-held camera shots are used with clinicians to suggest a sense of urgency and dynamism. Iedema (2001) asserts that texts are manifestations of social processes, and they always promote certain values over others. Iedema (2001) views the documentary under analysis as a political statement that raises awareness and demands social response.

O'Halloran (2004) investigates how a computer-based software can be coupled with systemic functional analysis of semiotic choices in film to reveal how meaning unfolds in real time. Two scenes from the film *Chinatown*, directed by Roman Polanski, are analysed. The semiotic analysis of the film involves film plot, sequence, mise-en-scene, and frame. Motifs like water and glasses are repeated in many scenes of the film, with the former referring to unfolding mysteries and the latter indicating distorted vision. In one of the scenes analysed, lighting makes the main female character, Evelyn, visually salient; the camera focuses on her face to get the viewer to see how beautiful she is. She wears a red lipstick, a hat with a netted black veil covering the top half of her face, and sits upon a red couch. She is portrayed as a "spider woman," mysterious, sexual, and potentially dangerous. This portrayal is contrasted with the bright lighting of the next scene where Evelyn and Jake, the male lead, walk in the street. They both occupy the central on-screen space. The direct gaze between the two leads



matches the intensity of their conversation. At the end of the scene, Jake accuses Evelyn of hiding something and rides the car, leaving her alone. The camera focuses on her downcast gaze and gesture of moving her hand to her throat. The viewer starts to realise Evelyn's efforts at self-control while she gazes into Jake's departing car, knowing that she is standing alone in a world that does not understand her position or the reasons for her actions. O'Halloran (2004) admits that there are some difficulties integrating software for semiotic analysis. Recording choices belonging to a certain semiotic system precluded the analysis of other choices belonging to another. Choices of lighting and colour could not be combined with those of gaze and distance. Combining these choices to analyse the footage in real time was difficult because the resulting footage was too fast for the analyst to grasp the significance of each choice employed. However, O'Halloran (2004) believes that, despite the difficulties, the use of computer technology in visual analysis is an option that must be considered while analysing meaning resulting from the interaction of semiotic choices in real time.

McIntyre (2008) stresses the importance of taking into account both linguistic and non-linguistic modes while analysing a filmed version of the play *Richard III*, particularly the soliloquy scene. The time period is represented through costumes as Richard's uniform could be associated with Second World War Nazi uniforms. The banners outside the palace are reminiscent of Nazi flags. Zooming in and close-up shots are used to increase the viewers' psychological closeness to Richard. They also reveal Richard's yellow teeth, suggesting decay and deviousness. Richard's initially gazes into the mirror, not addressing the viewers, then changes the direction of the gaze, arousing a sense of threat. The importance of McIntyre's (2008) study lies in that it highlights how multimodal analysis is essential to access and gain a better comprehensive understanding of the myriad interpretations of film, in general, and filmed versions of stage performances, in particular.

#### **2.1.4 Research Gap**

The researcher notes a number of points as far as research on dynamic texts is concerned. First, linguistic analysis is often relegated to multimodal analysis; studies on dynamic texts lean towards providing a detailed multimodal analysis rather than showing how linguistic and multimodal analyses can operate in tandem. Second, Tan, O'Halloran, and Podlasov (2011) acknowledge the challenges film analysis pose as far as multimodal analysis of dynamic texts is concerned, particularly when software is included. Third, examining how contrast and opposites are visually constructed and manifested is carried out via resorting to themes, motifs, characters, and plot points. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, much attention has been devoted to issues of identity and influencing the viewers, but research on how oppositions are creatively constructed and manifested is somehow lacking. Fourth, a growing body of literature has focused on multimodal analysis of documentaries, short films, music videos, TV advertisements, and videogames rather than examining feature films. The researcher observes that the majority of studies exploring issues of identity and impact on the viewers employ a qualitative approach and use Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework of multimodal analysis, which could be an implication of how other frameworks pose challenges for researchers in the field, be they technical or methodological.

## 2.2 Studies Tackling Discourse of Opposition

### 2.2.1 Binary Oppositions in Literature

Abbasi and Salimian (2012) contend that themes and meanings in Joyce's *Dubliners* are constructed and manifested based on how binary oppositions are combined and organised. Abbasi and Salimian's (2012) analysis is rooted in Saussure (1916) and Barthes' (1963) views of how meanings are constructed. Abbasi and Salimian (2012) believe that Joyce employs binary oppositions of life and death, past and present, voice and silence, new and conventional, activity and passivity, imagination and reality, superiority and inferiority, freedom and imprisonment to create, as well as criticise, a certain image of Dublin, that of paralysis, barrenness, and repressiveness, by portraying different characters unable to act, react, or decide in different situations, questioning established discourses of nationalism, family, culture, politics, and religion, and presenting a world where positive forces of ambition, energy, revolution, and determination are eliminated.

Putri and Sarwoto (2016) subscribe to Saussure's view that meanings are created by establishing differences and binary oppositions to examine Williams' *Summer and Smoke* narrative structure. Putri and Sarwoto (2016) maintain that *Summer and Smoke*'s narrative structure hinges upon binaries of life and death, soul and body, spirituality and sexuality, physical love and divine love, as proven by the binary transformations the main two characters, Alma and John, go through. Williams uses symbols like the stone angel, anatomy chart, telescope, water lilies, Chinese lagoon, summer, and smoke to foreground the contrast between the two main characters and the reversal of roles they undergo, i.e., how they start and end up differently.

Al-Sharqi (2017) states that the use of binary oppositions in Al-Mohameed's *Wolves of the Crescent Moon* provides the novel with a unifying thematic structure. Al-Mohameed deploys binaries of culture and modernisation, past and present, freedom and repression, domination and marginalisation, dream and reality to question the impact of modernity on Saudi society and how it transformed the society's value system, express concern regarding how the privileged social class views and treats the less privileged communities of colour, Bedouins, and expatriates, and expose the frustrating, alienating conditions and limited opportunities the less educated, lower-class members of the society have to go through and live in. Al-Sharqi (2017) explores how these binary oppositions are presented through repeated symbols and motifs and asserts that they successfully bring about and reveal the thematic concerns and intentions of the author of the novel.

### 2.2.2 Binary Oppositions in Visual Media

Amy-Chinn and Williamson (2005) adopt a cultural perspective looking at how a popular television character, the vampire Spike in the popular TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, blurs as well as disrupts the boundaries between oppositions, such as fear of and desire for the *Other*, good and bad, human and monster, whole and fractured selves, via tapping into pop culture references, music subcultures, and knowledge of the actor James Marsters, who plays him. Amy-Chinn and Williamson (2005) insist that Spike's character challenges binaries of gender and sexuality, floats across multiple identities, and shifts subjectivity over the course of the series. Amy-Chinn and Williamson (2005) posit that the construction and representation of Spike's character offer an updated, empathetic look at the *Other*.

Coegnarts and Kravanja (2014) use Saussure's binary oppositions in conjuncture with image schema, particularly CONTAINMENT schema as proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1987), to examine how oppositions of civilisation vs. wilderness and community vs. the individual are visually constructed and communicated in some of John Ford's Westerns. Coegnarts and Kravanja (2014) regard visual content and the arrangement of its elements as the most fundamental level of thematic organisation, thus relying on an iconographic or imagistic approach to conduct their analysis. CONTAINMENT consists of a three-part structure: an inside, a boundary, and an outside. In the selected films, binaries are manifested through the use of framing, different camera shots, camera movements, characters moving in and out of spaces, and the employment of doors and windows. Coegnarts and Kravanja (2014) claim that image schemas are important when it comes to analysing Westerns, in general, conveying binary oppositions, and giving structure and meaning to filmic imagery, in particular.

Chunmei (2018) believes that binary oppositions help construct the image of the main character in the film *Django Unchained* as well as convey underlying social meanings to the audience. Chunmei (2018) identifies three main oppositions in the film: resistance and submission, enjoyment and suffering, and civilisation and savagery. These binaries bring about issues of the injustices of slavery and how slaves are cruelly treated, abused, dehumanised, and marginalised by their owners. In addition, these binaries help reveal how rebellious Django is and how he constantly fights for freedom, compared to how other slaves are depicted in the film. White owners' civilised behaviour towards each other is presented in contrast to how brutally they treat their slaves. Chunmei (2018) argues that these binaries provide an underlying structure and meaning to the film as well as expose the atrocities inflicted upon slaves at a certain point in American history.

### **2.2.3 The Dichotomy of Us vs. Them**

Using critical discourse analysis, Bishop et al. (2007) analyse how two newspapers, one American and one Canadian, represent Israeli-Palestinian conflict in terms of the dichotomy of Us and Them. Bishop et al. (2007) observe that despite the U.S. and Canada's contrasting policies regarding international affairs, North American media outlets, as represented by *The Seattle Times* and *Vancouver Sun*, exhibit a great deal of similarity as far as representing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Bishop et al. (2007) trace five recurring themes embodying the Us and Them polarisation: Israeli benevolence, Palestinian opportunity, Palestinian failure, Palestinians as a future threat, and how Israeli actions are justified. The discourse propagated by both newspapers negatively portrays the Palestinian perspective, marginalises the Palestinian voice, and presents their reactions as violent and irrational. By contrast, it justifies Israeli violent actions against the Palestinians, aligns the U.S. and Israel against any Islamist terror, and portrays Israel in a positive light. Bishop et al.'s (2007) analysis highlights one of CDA's main principles that deep underlying values and assumptions about the *Other* shape how knowledge is created, received, and circulated through media.

A seminal work mentioned by Jeffries (2014) on constructing unconventional oppositions is that of Davies (2007). Davies (2007) proposes that triggers, such as parallelism, connectives, and negation, give rise to contextualising uncanonical opposites in news reports. Davies (2007) explores how the *Sunday Mirror* reports demonstrations against war in Iraq in 2003. Davies (2007) maintains that unconventional opposites are used to construct two polarised groups of protestors and label them as acceptable or unacceptable. Davies (2007) shows that the kind of language used to refer to different groups participating in the

demonstration is motivated by the writer's ideological alignment with certain participants and his negative attitude towards other groups. Davies (2007) maintains that news reports hinge upon the polarised distinction of Us and Them to influence the reader, who, as a result, tends to fit people into this grouping and evaluate events accordingly.

Oddo (2011) examines the legitimisation strategies employed by Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and George W. Bush in four speeches to manipulate the public, justify, and promote wars. Oddo (2011) argues that both presidents use similar positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation strategies to imply that violence against enemies and aggressors is necessary. Both presidents use highly moralised nouns and processes to represent the U.S. and its actions and negatively valued nouns and processes, along with unmodalised assertions, to represent the enemies, thereby justifying the use of force and military intervention.

Drawing on Charteris-Black's model of critical metaphor analysis, Hampl (2019) examines the construction of Us, the U.S.A and its allies, and Them, terrorists and dictatorships, in the discourse of President George W. Bush starting from September 11, 2001 to May 2003. The total number of speeches used is ninety two, containing nearly 148,000 words. Hampl (2019) stresses the fact that Bush used three sets of metaphorical constructions as persuasive rhetorical devices to portray the U.S. favourably and demonise the *Other* in an attempt to justify military operations overseas. These sets are related to the metaphorical concepts of hunt, plant, and growth, as in The U.S.A is a hunter; The U.S.A. is a gardener; terrorism and terrorist organisations are parasites; and terrorism and the Iraqi Regime are growing threats or dangers. Critical metaphor theory, as proposed by Charteris-Black (2004, 2007), focuses on how social context impacts the analysis and interpretation of metaphors and contributes to identifying the underlying ideologies, beliefs, and attitudes of the discourse community in which they occur. Hampl (2019) observes that dichotomous oppositions or entities marked in terms of social, political, and moral differences create points of departure for the audience, thereby shaping their opinions and attitudes and conveying an image of the authority as being effective and taking initiative. Hampl (2019) contends that the metaphorical concept of hunt excludes any form of negotiation between the hunter and the hunted. The hunt metaphor, therefore, evokes both war and crime frames. Lexical terms associated with the hunter include "coalition," "military," "attacks," and "enemies," whereas lexical terms used to reference the hunted include "murderers," "killers," and "war criminals." The hunt metaphor indicates the speaker's intentions of bringing criminals to justice as well as actively taking action to punish them, thereby demonstrating the power of the hunter. Hampl (2019) argues that the plant metaphor is used to highlight the role of the U.S. in rooting out hostile elements presented as parasites. The U.S. is presented as a cultivating force that prevents the development of terrorism and terrorist organisations, hence the need for strong counter actions. Finally, Hampl (2019) states that Bush uses the growth metaphor to present growing terrorist threats as harmful elements that need to be controlled and stopped, which also calls for strong counteraction.

#### **2.2.4 Research Gap**

With the exception of Davies' (2007) study, the existing body of research on constructing oppositions demonstrates constant employment of Saussure's concept of binary oppositions and critical discourse analysis to describe and examine how binary oppositions are realised in a variety of texts. Scant attention has been paid to linguistic triggers that contribute to the creation of contexts for unconventional opposites to occur in different types of texts. Notably, in-depth linguistic analysis of how oppositions are constructed in different types of

visual media is still lacking, let alone feature films. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the research to date has focused on analysing the construction of the dichotomy of Us vs. Them in political texts, such as news reports, speeches, political debates, and interviews. Exploring binary oppositions in literary texts is rather descriptive, not relying on any linguistic analysis. There has been no systematic analysis of how visual means contribute to the creation of contrast in visual media, particularly films. Furthermore, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there have been hardly any attempts to unravel the underlying socio-political ideologies underpinning as well as impacting visual and linguistic construction of oppositions in films, in general, and dystopian science fiction films, in particular.

### 3. METHODOLOGY (Analytical Frameworks)

#### 3.1 Jeffries' (2014) Framework for Constructing Opposition

Jeffries (2014) proposes a framework for detecting unconventional, contextually created or constructed opposites, be they words or phrases, whose oppositional relations emanate from the co-occurrence of a range of lexical and structural triggers. Jeffries (2014) maintains that such "non-canonical antonyms or non-systemic semantic oppositions," similar to conventional opposites, fall under four main categories: mutual exclusivity, mutual dependence, gradability, and reversibility. Mutual exclusivity encompasses those extreme opposites, with no values intervening in the middle. Accordingly, the presence of one term denies the other, like dead-alive, for instance. Mutual dependent types of opposites are relational in nature; the presence of one term acknowledges the presence of the other, like doctor-patient and husband-wife. Gradable opposites are very common, and the presence of one term does not necessarily mean the presence of the other, as in long-short, hot-cold. The final category entails that one of the pairs reverses the process or the direction of the other, such as up-down and button-unbutton. However, Jeffries (2014) points out that there is a great deal of fluidity between the boundaries of these categories and that usage blurs some of the aforementioned distinctions (Jeffries 2014).

##### 3.1.1 Structural Triggers

**Negation:** The X not Y frame is sometimes used with conventional pairs of opposites to emphasise the contrast or respond to an accusation. In the case of constructed opposites, the two terms always need to be specified; otherwise, they cannot be deduced. Negation can also be combined with parallel structures and conjunctions to construct unconventional opposites.

**Parallel Structures:** Jeffries (2014) stresses that parallel structures are instrumental in creating a context for opposition to be constructed. In "There is a *plastic toy*. There is no *hope*," a poem by Carol Ann Duffy, *plastic toys* and *hope* are configured as the alternatives available to dolphins in captivity. Plastic toys are the symbol of captivity as opposed to *hope*, which represents freedom. "He is concerned with *volume*, space. I with the *next meal*."

**Coordination:** Jeffries (2014) contends that conjunctions, such as "and," "but," "yet," and "or," can be used to create contexts for opposition.

**Comparatives:** Jeffries (2014) states that comparative structures are standard contexts for both conventional and constructed opposites.

**3.1.2 Lexical Triggers:** These range from verbs such as “compare,” “become,” “turn,” “change,” “transform” to phrases such as “treading a fine line,” “a battle between,” “a double edge of,” and “such a contrast.” Adjectives and adverbs can also be used to create contrast. Jeffries (2014) provides examples such as “atrocious ingenuity,” “demented sophistication,” and “majestic abjection.”

## **3.2 Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) Framework of Multimodal Analysis**

Rooted in Social Semiotics, Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) framework of Visual Grammar analyses multimodal texts in terms of three metafunctions: representational, interactive, and compositional. These correspond to Halliday’s ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions, respectively.

### **3.2.1 The Representational Metafunction**

Representational meaning comprises a narrative structure that involves participants doing something to or for each other, and a vector connecting them. Narrative patterns are presentational in nature; they serve to present evolving actions, events, processes of change, and brief, temporary, transient spatial arrangements. Vectors are usually represented by diagonal lines; they could be formed via bodies, limbs, tools in action arrows in diagrams, and roads running diagonally across the image. A sense of directionality must be present in a narrative representation (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

In every semiotic relation, there are two types of participants: interactive and represented. The former is the one speaking, writing, making, or viewing the image, whereas the latter is the person, place, or thing represented in and by the speech, writing, or image (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). This categorisation is not always definitive or clear-cut, for sometimes the producer of an image is also represented in the image. The relation between the actor and goal is called a transaction (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). In some transactional structures, the participants are both actors and goals. In that case, they are called interactors to indicate their double roles (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

When images or diagrams have only one participant, the resulting pattern is non-transactional. The action has no goal and is not aimed at anyone or anything. Other representations could include only the goal; these are called events. Something is happening to someone, but we cannot see who or what makes it happen. The actor is deleted or made anonymous (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

When the vector is formed by an eyeline or by the direction of a glance of one of the represented participants; the process is reactional, the participants are called “reacters,” and the goals are “phenomena.” Reactions can be transactional or non-transactional; in the latter case, the phenomenon is not there, and it is left to the viewer’s imagination (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

Locative circumstances relate participants to settings. This will entail a contrast between foregrounding and backgrounding realised either by overlapping participants and obscuring the setting, drawing the setting in less detail, muting and desaturating the colour of the setting, or overexposing the setting by making it darker or lighter than the foreground.

These features can occur in a variety of combinations, and they are also gradients, not definitive or clear-cut (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

### **3.2.2 The Interactive Metafunction**

Interactive meaning concerns the social relations between the producer, the viewer, and the object represented. Via the utilisation of gaze and gestures, an image can demand that the viewer enters into some kind of relation, be it that of affinity or inferiority. The gesture can invite the viewer, point finger, or create a distance. An image presenting represented participants as the subject of contemplation and scrutiny or sources of information to the viewer is an “offer” (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). Represented participants in this kind of image do not look at the viewer, and even if they do, they look from a distance; therefore, the impact of their look is diminished (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

Accordingly, there are two kinds of images: subjective and objective. The former has a built-in perspective, while the latter does not. Subjective and objective images could be realised via oblique and frontal angles, where the former type conveys detachment and the latter involvement. In a similar vein, a high angle, for example, makes the subject look small or insignificant, whereas a low angle can make him imposing and powerful. If the picture is at eye level, the point of view is that of equality, and there is no power difference involved (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

### **3.2.3 The Compositional Metafunction**

The placement of participants and elements in the image endows them with certain informational values (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). The elements on the left are presented as Given, as something the reader knows, whereas the elements on the right are New, something that is not yet known or agreed upon. Therefore, the meaning of the New is subject to debate and contestation (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). This structure is ideological, as it may or may not conform to the beliefs and attitudes of the consumer of the image. This pattern is close in nature to the information and thematic structure in the English language. In the same vein, placing elements at the top of the image indicates that they constitute the Ideal, whereas placing them at the bottom indicates they are Real. Real means more specific, detailed, or practical (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). Similarly, if a visual composition makes use of the Centre and places other elements around it, this means that it is presented as the most important element upon which all other elements are dependent. How marginal the margins are is also dependent upon the size and salience of the Centre (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

In addition to how they are placed, participants and pictorial elements can be highlighted or become more or less important via focus, lighting, and placement in the foreground or the background. This is called salience. Salience creates a hierarchy of importance that aims at attracting the viewer or the reader’s attention (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). The presence or absence of framing devices, such as dividing lines or actual frame lines, disconnects or connects the elements of the image, indicating whether they belong together or not (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). The placement of elements, salience, and the presence or absence of framing devices show how semiotic means and resources interact with one another, on the one hand, and with the context in which they are produced, on the other. How these elements fit together in a given context allows for the realisation of different textual meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

### **3.3 Shapes and their Meanings**

Shapes have a representational power; they can affect the viewers' nervous system, as they have an emotional impact. Squares and rectangles are regarded as the elements of the mechanical technological order of the world. They form the building blocks with which the world is constructed; they are seen in roads, buildings, and even frames of pictures. They denote straightforwardness and workmanlike meaning. They can connote that order positively as a source of progress or negatively as a source of oppression. Circles, on the other hand, are self-contained and complete in themselves. They denote endlessness and eternity. Circles and curves are the elements associated with organic and natural order (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). The meaning behind geometrical shapes is motivated via their properties or the values attached to them in certain socio-cultural contexts, hence their ability to convey positive or negative meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

### **3.4 The Use of Colour**

van Leeuwen (2011) stresses that colours are not developed in vacuum; they develop in response to new communicative needs. Meanings of colours are generally derived from what people have associated with or said about them in a certain domain or social context. Colour meanings come about through metaphor and connotation. Colours can fulfil the three metafunctions. Ideationally, they can be used to denote people, places things, classes of people, and more general ideas. Colours can also be used to do things to and for others, such as intimidate, warn, or subdue. Colours can be used to create coherence between different parts within a whole. Colours are able to fulfil these functions simultaneously. "Colour is a complex cultural construct that resists generalisation;" therefore, there is no single language of colour; colour is indeed a social phenomenon (Pastoureau, 2001, as cited in van Leeuwen 2011). Colour is primarily affective. They can be toned down, neutralised, or highly saturated to convey a variety of meanings, ranging from gloominess and repression to adventure and positivity (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006).

### **3.5 Note on Film Analysis**

In *Redesigning English: New Texts, New Identities*, van Leeuwen (2005) states that the earlier edition of *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* did not dedicate enough attention to a proper analysis of the moving image. The researcher believes that this article completes the vision upon which the analytical framework put forward by Kress and van Leeuwen rests. In the aforementioned article, van Leeuwen (2005) believes that the main differences between still and moving images arise from motion, for both the camera and the people, in addition to the fact that images can be edited into sequences and that moving images are combined with other modes, such as speech, music, and sound effects.

In both still and moving images, the position of the camera creates a relation between the viewer and what is depicted in the image. The camera can make the viewer look down on people, places, or things or look up to them; it can bring him/her close to them or put him/her at a distance from them, and so on. The difference is that, in moving images, this relationship is dynamic. The camera can zoom into a closer shot or out to a wider shot; it can crane up to a high angle or down to a low angle, and so on (van Leeuwen 2005).

Even when the camera is not moving, the people in the shot can move. They can walk towards or away from the camera, they can climb on a stage, or walk up a flight of stairs with



the camera tilting up to follow them. They can sit down, lie down, and kneel down with the camera tilting down, making the viewers look at them from above (van Leeuwen 2005). The moving image renders social relations, as far as people, places, and things are concerned, dynamic and flexible. As a result, distance can be achieved in two ways: subject-initiated so that the people or things in the image bring about the change of distance by moving towards or away from the camera, and camera-initiated so that the camera causes the distance to change by moving towards or away from the people, places, or things depicted in the image. When the camera distance changes, the viewer's imaginary relation to the people, places, and things shown will also change (van Leeuwen 2005).

Direct and indirect address operate in both still and moving images, but in moving images they can be dynamicised. A person can turn towards the camera and then look at the lens, thereby moving from indirect to direct address, or vice versa, but this can only be initiated by the subject. The camera cannot initiate it, although a director can ask the subject to look or not to look at the camera (van Leeuwen, 2005).

### **3.5 Procedures**

The researcher opts for a qualitative method to examine how oppositions of suppression vs. freedom, status quo vs. revolution, and the oppressor vs. the oppressed are manifested and represented visually and linguistically. The qualitative method is used to describe, analyse, and discuss the significance of the findings and the examples provided. The researcher first lists the types of structural and lexical triggers employed to construct opposition, provides some contextualised examples under each category, and fully comments on them. The researcher then proceeds to explore how visual means and resources interact to realise representational, interactive, and compositional meanings. The researcher opts for larger screen shots, not just an approximation, to discern how various visual resources are combined to convey opposition. The researcher selects shots from certain scenes that visibly exhibit opposition and examines how these shots display patterns and consistencies as far as the oppositions under investigation are concerned. Shots are listed with a time stamp, followed by a table pinpointing visual elements specific to each shot selected, and a full commentary. The researcher attempts to investigate the hypothesis that contrast can be created visually and linguistically to either favourably or negatively portray opposing parties involved in the power struggle, and whether this portrayal entails underlying ideological underpinnings that could impact the representation of those parties, who, in turn, embody the binary oppositions under investigation.

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Structural Triggers of Opposition in V's Speech**

The researcher observes the presence of two structural triggers of opposition: negation and comparison, in addition to some lexical triggers. They are listed in chronological order.

#### **4.1.1 Negation and Parallelism**

**“People should *not* be afraid of their government. Government should be afraid of their people.”** Negation and parallelism are used here to construct opposition between two different types of fear, in V's opinion: fear that emanates from submission and oppression and fear that emerges as a result of freedom and a revolutionary spirit. According to this, V's character could be viewed as a free revolutionary who desires to inspire fearlessness, but is

also dangerous. V uses violence to avenge himself against those who experimented on him in the past and oppressed the country.

#### 4.1.2 Comparison

“Certainly there are those more responsible than others, and they will be held accountable.” V establishes a gradable opposition and distinguishes between those responsible for what the country went down to and those who are more responsible. V says that people share some implicit responsibility in the oppression brought about by Sutler’s regime because they were silent and passive. However, others, meaning those who assist Sutler in his suppressive, despotic measures, are directly responsible; therefore, he threatens that he will target them and enforce justice via his own hands.

#### 4.2 Lexical Triggers

##### Example (1)

“It is to Madam Justice that I dedicate this concerto, in honour of the holiday she seems to have taken from these parts, and in recognition of the imposter that stands in her stead.” V personifies justice and laments her absence, on the one hand, and establishes a contrast between justice as an absent person and Sutler, “the imposter,” in his opinion, who rules the country, on the other. Sutler’s motives are peace and order, but, in V’s viewpoint, Sutler is a deceitful, oppressive leader who only seeks his own interests.

##### Example (2)

“Because while the truncheon may be used in lieu of conversation, words will always retain their power.” A contrast is established between truncheon as a means of violently stifling free voice and conversation. A mutually exclusive opposition is set and iterated by V in his speech on November the fifth to embody the difference between his beliefs in freedom, the power of words, and the oppressive ways of Sutler’s regime. This sentence is ironic on two levels. First, V’s ways to achieve and maintain freedom include killing people and bombing the Old Bailey and the parliament. Second, Sutler preaches peace and order, yet he uses violent, repressive ways to silence his opposition and convince the population that, by so doing, he will bring about peace and order.

##### Example (3)

“Adam Sutler. With his gleaming boots of polished leather and his garrison of goons. He promised you order. He promised you peace.” A contrast is created between boots of polished leather and garrison of goons, on the one hand, and peace and order, on the other because “garrison” means troops and “goons” is an informal word that refers to bullies and thugs. Sutler instils fear and deploys violent and oppressive means to mislead people into believing that these are the solutions to chaos and war, while, in fact, he does that to maintain hegemonic dominance and order. V argues that violence and oppression, as exemplified by boots and garrison of goons, and peace and order, from the perspective of Sutler, are mutually dependent. He resents that and wants people to understand that freedom, not tyranny, is the rightful gateway to peace, welfare, and order.

## Example (4)

“A year during which I hope to see a **return** of **justice** and an **end** to **tyranny**.” V creates a mutually exclusive opposition between the oppression and tyranny of Sutler’s regime and justice, in V’s point of view. He tells people that fear was coercively implemented and normalised by Sutler to ensure that order and peace prevail; however, people’s silence in the face of Sutler’s despotism and dictatorship made him more corrupt and unjust. V wants justice, as in the ability to have the right to speak up, and just laws that preserve people’s humanity. Sutler and his accomplices arrest and torture anyone who speaks against them or anyone who is different from them in mentality or orientation.

### 4.3 Multimodal Analysis

#### 4.3.1 V’s Speech

Throughout V’s speech, the researcher notes that V is an interactive participant who aims at eliciting different reactions from the viewers, be they people, Evey, Finch, or Sutler’s government officials. V remains the reactor, and the viewers are the phenomena.



Time 18:49

<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Shot</b>	Extreme long
	<b>Camera angle</b>	Frontal; Low
<b>Compositional</b>	<b>Salience</b>	Size and colour contrast
	<b>Framing</b>	Frame within a frame
	<b>Placement of V</b>	Centre

V takes control of a state-run TV channel to broadcast a speech. To signify the prominence of V in the shot, he is placed in the centre of the image in a frame within a frame, from a frontal low camera angle. There is a colour contrast established, albeit desaturated. Desaturated colours intensify the sense of drama (Bordwell, Thompson & Smith 2017; Block 2008). V looks down upon the viewers in the world of *V for Vendetta*; the low angle, along with his centrality within the frame and the huge size of the frame, signal the importance of what he is about to tell the people of London. V’s gesture and gaze demand the people, i.e., the viewers, to pay attention and invite the viewers’ engagement. V’s high placement within the

frame also signifies the Ideal; the ideal for London, on the one hand, and the filmmakers, on the other. V's central high placement within the frame begs the question: would the radical revolutionary make a difference? The visual elements combine to render him physically commanding, despite being on a recorded video, and grant him power over his viewers, be they those who are in charge of the state-run TV channel, Sutler's government officials, or the people of London. The frame within a frame separates V from the extreme long shot of London, indicating the difference between V's world and Sutler's London. The red colour represents revolution and V's passion and desire for social change. London is painted in shades of grey and faded blue, conveying the rigidity, dullness, and repression of Sutler's London.



**Time 19:29**

<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Shot</b>	Close-up
	<b>Camera angle</b>	Frontal; at eye level
<b>Compositional</b>	<b>Saliency</b>	Colour; size; focus
	<b>Placement of V</b>	Centre

V remains in the centre of the frame, his mask is in focus and enlarged with the colour red in the background, inviting the viewers to pay attention to what the mask symbolises. V asserts, throughout the film, that he represents an idea. The mask of Guy Fawkes represents rebellion against dictatorship, hegemonic order, and social injustice. The colour red is in focus covering the background, which is also in focus, and inscribing the V logo on the screen, hence channelling revolution and determination to thwart the system. The close-up shot also offers the viewers a chance of contemplation and scrutiny with regards to what V and his mask represent. V's mask creates the illusion that he is looking the viewers in the eye, be they the viewers of his speech, or while breaking the fourth wall in a close-up shot, demanding involvement and establishing a relationship of equality.



**Time 19:45**

<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Shot</b>	Medium, close-up
	<b>Camera angle</b>	Frontal, slightly high
	<b>Camera movement</b>	Panning
<b>Compositional</b>	<b>Salience</b>	desaturated grey and blue colours
	<b>Placement of Finch</b>	Left, close to the margin of the frame

The reason behind the composition of the shot is two-fold; on the one hand, the camera angle is frontal and slightly high, signifying the powerful impact V's speech has on Finch. On the other, Finch's left, close to the margin position represents his entrapment in the system and his inability to act upon what V is doing- given his post as a police officer in the film. The viewer is offered a chance to contemplate Finch's reaction given the size of the shot. Two-thirds of the right part of the frame is dedicated to orient the viewers with Finch's whereabouts- a state-run TV channel. Finch is obliged to do his job, but he is also pondering V's words. The background is enshrouded in a desaturated grey-blue tones that indicate monotony, moral dubiousness, and relentless repressiveness.



**Time 20:12**

<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Shot</b>	Medium
	<b>Camera angle</b>	Low
<b>Compositional</b>	<b>Saliency</b>	Colour contrast: grey and red
	<b>Framing</b>	Frame within a frame
	<b>Placement of V</b>	Background, left, right and centre
	<b>Placement of Sutler's assistants</b>	Left, right, and close to margins

V remains in power, albeit relegated to the background given the low camera angle and placement within the shot. By contrast, Sutler's assistants are close to the margins, indicating entrapment and being caught off-guard. V's central high placement, while in contrast to Sutler's Assistants', signals the difference between the Ideal and the Real, i.e., the radical revolutionary vs. the oppressive. The colour contrast between red and shades of grey is maintained, along with V's frame within a frame positioning, to further enhance the separation and difference between his world and that of Sutler's. V's eyeline is directed towards the viewer, whereas Sutler's assistants' eyeline is directed towards the margins of the frame, conveying how these two parties think differently. V's gaze is directed to the viewers, be those who are watching his speech on TV, or while breaking the fourth wall, engaging the viewers and creating a relationship of involvement and alignment. The high angle implies the powerful impact his words have on those watching. Sutler's assistants look away from the screen, intensifying their sense of entrapment, bafflement, and worry.



**Time 20:32**



**Time 20:33**



**Time 20:37**

<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Shot</b>	Medium long
	<b>Camera angle</b>	Frontal
	<b>Camera movement</b>	Panning
<b>Compositional</b>	<b>Placement of viewers</b>	Centre
	<b>Salience</b>	Neutral, desaturated colours

Since V is mainly directing his speech to the people of London in the world of *V for Vendetta*, they are positioned in the centre of the frame. The viewer is invited to examine their reaction to V's words through a panning camera movement. The usage of a medium long shot with a frontal angle conveys the impact of V's speech on the people of London. Feelings of surprise, concern, attentiveness, and confusion permeate the three frames. Neutrally desaturated colours, coupled with people sitting on chairs and couches, signify a socially and politically inactive and complacent population.



**Time 20:29**

<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Shot</b>	Close-up
	<b>Camera angle</b>	High; Over the shoulder Frontal for V Oblique for Evey
<b>Compositional</b>	<b>Salience</b>	Size
	<b>Placement of V</b>	Right
	<b>Placement of Evey</b>	Left

The aim behind the composition of this shot is two-fold. On the one hand, it places V and Evey as opposed to each other; V strives for freedom and wants to inspire fearlessness. Evey, on the other hand, is someone, in V's point of view, who has been psychologically and mentally entrapped and imprisoned by the regime for so long. Evey is a product of Sutler's regime whose goals are to instil fear and silence opposition. The over-the-shoulder shot is used to capture conversations; therefore, the composition of the shot implies that V is in fact talking to the likes of Evey. The frontal angle with V's gaze demands the viewers' attention and engagement. V remains compelling and imposing due to the large close-up of his mask; furthermore, the high camera angle connotes his power over Evey, at that point, and foreshadows his impact on her in the later stages of the film.





**Time 20:51**

<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Shot</b>	Medium
	<b>Camera angle</b>	Frontal
<b>Compositional</b>	<b>Salience</b>	Black colour
	<b>Placement of police and rifles</b>	Left and right
	<b>Placement of clubs</b>	Centre

The clubs' black colour and placement in the centre reveal how oppressive, cruel, and violent Sutler's regime is. Members of the police force are placed to the left and right of the frame in a medium shot carrying rifles, indicating that they are mere executors of orders. The viewer is unable to see their faces, creating a barrier between the viewer and those soldiers and enhancing the viewers' sense of detachment and disconnectedness from the language Sutler adopts to muffle voices of change. Members of the police force, along with their black rifles and clubs, are, therefore, collectively viewed as a unit that mercilessly exercise violence in a regime that is heavily reliant on excessive force to stifle opposing voices and instil fear.

#### **4.3.2 Sutler's Speech**

Despite being the actor and reactor, addressing the people of London, Sutler has no goal or phenomena. The process is non-transactional, for it lacks bi-directionality. He is boxed in diminished TV frames, glancing from afar, with no one to listen or react to his words.



**Time 1:52:04**

<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Shot</b>	Extreme long shot
	<b>Camera angle</b>	Frontal; high
<b>Compositional</b>	<b>Salience</b>	diminished size; grey colour
	<b>Framing</b>	Frame within a frame

Sutler's speech at the end of the film, right before his confrontation with V, is a reverse emulation of V's speech at the beginning. Sutler is reduced in size, relegated to the background, and shot from a high angle to imply defeat and loss of control and power. London appears to be bigger than Sutler, connoting that people started to overcome their fear and that Sutler's rule is coming to an end. Sutler is framed in a rectangular box to evoke both his short-sightedness and his detachment from both the people of London in the world of *V for Vendetta* and the viewers.



**Time 1:52:10**

<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Shot</b>	Close up
	<b>Camera angle</b>	Frontal
<b>Compositional</b>	<b>Saliency</b>	Grey and blue colours; diminished size
	<b>Framing</b>	Frame within a frame

This is another frame presenting a visual reverse to V's speech earlier in the film. Sutler appears to be reduced in size, relegated to the background, with a close-up of the TV on which he appears. Without media and propaganda manufactured by his followers and accomplices, Sutler, in effect, has no power, hence the diminished size. Grey and blue colours permeate the frame to indicate rigidity of thinking and short-sightedness. The flag's red colour brings to mind fascist regimes and Nazi propaganda. Sutler is enclosed in a box in which he seems smaller in size, indicating loss of power, detachment, separation from what is happening on the ground, and lack of understanding of how people are feeling towards his regime. His grim look and snobbish facial expression also detach him from the viewer who is aware, at that point in time in the film, that Sutler is losing his control and power and that he is ineffectually resorting to fear as an instrument to intimidate people, to no avail.



**Time 1:52:43**



**Time 1:52:46**

<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Shot</b>	Long
	<b>Camera angle</b>	Frontal
	<b>Camera movement</b>	Panning
<b>Compositional</b>	<b>Framing</b>	Frame within a frame
	<b>Saliency</b>	Warmer colours; Emptiness foregrounded

Sutler is talking to the void, to people who no longer believe his words or fear his punishment. Nobody is watching his speech; he is enclosed in a box addressing empty chairs. Colours and lighting are warmer in tone, indicating that change is underway. Being confined within a frame and diminished in size detaches and separates him from the viewers, rendering his speech futile.



**Time 1:52:48**

<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Shot</b>	Long
	<b>Camera angle</b>	Low
<b>Compositional</b>	<b>Placement of Sutler</b>	Background
	<b>Saliency</b>	Warmer colours; emptiness foregrounded

Sutler is relegated to the background talking to the void, with no one watching or listening. Warmer colours permeate the frame to indicate that change is underway. The TV frames juxtaposed with the low angle separate and detach Sutler from the surroundings and the viewer, indicating the impending demise of a defeated Big Brother.

#### **4.4 Issues and Binaries Tackled and their Significance**

The most significant finding, prominently and recurrently exhibited by the examples the researcher outlines is the power of the creative use and choice of lexis and structure. The oppositions examined in the current study are realised via a variety of subsumed binaries; the lexis and structures used to construct and represent these oppositions, binaries, and issues are creatively employed in a variety of ways and combinations.

#### **4.4.1 The Mask vs. the Man beneath the Mask**

V's representation of notions like freedom, resistance, and revolution is established via a number of binaries in the film. The first of which is the man/face beneath the mask and what the mask represents. By adopting a mask likened to Guy Fawkes and destroying the Old Bailey and the parliament on November the fifth, V assimilates his identity with that of the historical figure. Accordingly, V immortalises the idea of revolting against a government that neither acknowledges pluralism nor the existence of oppositional voices. His iteration of the fact that he represents an idea, in conjunction with the contoured mask, the perfectly symmetrical wig, and the cloak, renders V invincible in the eyes of his enemies, for they are denied access to his facial features. At the end of the film, Evey opts away from unmasking V, despite having the chance, for she comes to the conclusion that V's memory and the idea he represents are far more powerful if his anonymity and larger-than-life character are maintained. Separating the man from the mask provides a symbolic resonance to what the mask represents; therefore, the mask becomes a tool with a certain effect available to anyone who has it, not necessarily linked to V's vendetta (Mo 2018).

#### **4.4.2 Belief Systems, Radicalism, Terrorism, and Fear**

Another crucial distinction drawn in the film is the one demarcating different belief systems: radicalism, terrorism, and fear. Clearly, V and Sutler, along with his accomplices, embody two kinds of radical belief systems that lead them to perform acts of terrorism for different causes to incite different types of fear. The state, under Sutler's rule, instils fear via manufactured media propaganda that consolidates certain narratives about opposition and national security and preclude the integration of pluralistic voices. Via implementing radical measures, such as phone tapping, detention, and torture at secret prisons or concentration camps, the state in the world of *V for Vendetta* commits terrorising acts to maintain and normalise socio-political hegemony and the status quo. People's conformity to the status quo, their compliance, and submission guarantee the continuity and solidification of the belief system upon which the state is built. Opposition, by contrast, activates the state's right to exercise control via committing terrorising acts. V, on the other hand, commits terrorising acts against those in power to disrupt their narrative, instil fearlessness, and spur people into acting against tyranny and oppression. The two parties are, therefore, radical by the nature of their actions, using violence and terrorism, albeit for different causes. The filmmakers behind *V for Vendetta* distinguish between individual terrorism and group terrorism (Keller 2008). They portray the former in a positive light because it is used to preserve inclusivity and civil liberties. It is noteworthy to mention that some of the critique levelled against the film is that it hails and encourages violence and chaos under the pretext of propelling human rights (Combe et al. 2013).

#### **4.4.3 Conformity vs. Diversity**

In a similar vein, the binary between conformity and difference is highlighted in the film via how Sutler's regime utilises media and religion to lump and stigmatise certain factions or people of different sexual, racial, and religious orientations, presumably for the preservation of unity and order. In essence, the state in the world of *V for Vendetta* seeks to maintain hegemonic socio-political order that ensures people's compliance and silence, on the one hand, and prevents civil disobedience, on the other. V violently fights the prejudice and antagonism the regime inflicts upon minorities and strives for freedom, inclusion, and pluralism, even if the state ends up being chaotic, hoping to set the stage for a new world built upon justice. V is

also keen on exposing the falsehood of the media propaganda the regime propagates to instil fear and contempt towards those who are deemed different.

#### **4.4.4 Visual Contrast**

Visually, V is given salience and leverage over his foes via employing frontal low camera angles and different lighting, foregrounding the size of his mask and the colour red he is associated with, placing him in the centre of the frame, separating him from his enemies by window frames, TV frames, poles, etc., looking physically compelling and commanding, and towering over his opponents during their encounters. By contrast, V's opponents are shot with high camera angles, different lighting, and colour schemes, usually grey or blue. They are usually placed near the margins of the frame, frames pass through them like an incision, or enclosed within rectangular shapes. The visual contrast contributes to the positive portrayal of V and the negative depiction of his opponents. The filmmakers behind *V for Vendetta* render V more appealing in order to ensure as well as impact the viewers' alignment with his actions. Conversely, the antagonists' world is depicted as dull, morally questionable, merciless, and rigid.

According to Jeffries (2014), science fiction novels and thrillers allow for what she calls "departure of reality," for they immerse the reader, seer, or hearer in an alternative construction of reality and help him transiently suspend his disbelief (Jeffries 2014). Unconventional opposites used in such contexts instil and create mental representations that affect the reader's stance towards the concepts or divides included in these binaries. In *V for Vendetta*, unconventional oppositions produce mental representations that impel the viewer to develop a relationship of solidarity and alignment with V's cause, his strife and struggle for freedom, equality, and change, and his revolution. They also trigger the viewer's misalignment with, separation, and distance from Sutler's oppressive regime and system, his hegemonic tyranny, unequal access to resources, and manipulative, distorted representation of the *other*. Jeffries (2014) also notes that some genres, like science fiction, superhero, and murder mysteries, to mention a few, are contextually constructed around the oppositions of good and bad in order to convince the reader, seer, or hearer to adopt a certain point of view or stance (Jeffries 2014). Consequently, very little room is given to some types of unconventionally created oppositions, like gradable or mutually dependent opposites. The use of mutually exclusive opposites in *V for Vendetta* corroborates Jeffries' (2014) remarks and works in favour of the ideologies endorsed and propagated by the filmmakers behind the film, those of radicalism, revolution, freedom, and equality.

#### **5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Since the framework employed to analyse the scripts of both films, i.e., Jeffries' (2014), is reliant on the unconventional, creative use and choice of lexical and structural triggers, the researcher has not been able to numerically list the specific linguistic details presented in the examples extracted because such creativity affects the data used and does not allow for categorical enumeration.

#### **6. CONCLUSION**

Cinema is an effective medium for world-building. The filmmakers behind *V for Vendetta* make use of the visual resources at their disposal to critique and expose ideologies rooted in hegemony and rigid dogma and embrace and advocate for notions of freedom, equality, and change. In conjunction with creatively constructed linguistic choices, the variety

of visual resources at the filmmakers' disposal enable them to establish oppositions and represent the characters and entities embodying them negatively or positively to pinpoint, critique, expose, or embrace certain ideological underpinnings and express socio-political leanings and standpoints.

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## **Dangerous Liaison: Multimodality of Gendered Nationalism in the Subtitling of Abu-Akleh's Docufiction**

Rowan Mohamed Nabil Atta, Nihad Mansour, Riham E.A Debian  
Institute of Applied Linguistics and Translation, Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University  
Email: [rowanatta98@gmail.com](mailto:rowanatta98@gmail.com), [mansour\\_nihad@hotmail.com](mailto:mansour_nihad@hotmail.com),  
[riham.e.a.debian@gmail.com](mailto:riham.e.a.debian@gmail.com)

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the official subtitled Palestinian docufiction in honor of the veteran Aljazeera Journalist Shireen Abu Akleh whose killing in 2022 by the Israeli Army in Palestine attracted significant international attention. The relationship between gender and nationalism is an under-studied issue in gender and translation studies. McClintock (1991) proposes that women's relationship to nationalism is complex. It is constructed in the symbolism of the mother of the nation that in some cases does not square neatly with the patriarchal nationalist narrative. Shireen Abu Akleh is a case in point. Being an unmarried Christian female reporter who holds an American passport besides her Palestinian nationality has made some Arabs quite skeptical of how Abu Akleh may fit in their predetermined category of a nationalist hero. Hence, this study scrutinizes the notion of gender construction of the Journalist Abu Akleh through the English subtitles of the proposed Arabic docufiction and how this idea is prevalent in audiovisual translation. A multimodal approach based on Ledin and Machin's (2020) model examines certain shots from a non-verbal perspective. The verbal aspect is investigated using Diaz Cintas and Remael's (2014) subtitling strategies. Thus, this official docufiction reveals how Palestine addresses this issue by depicting the murder of its female journalist Abu Akleh. The study shows that Abu Akleh is depicted in a heroic light with high leadership skills throughout the film, categorizing her as a dynamic participant in her country's conflict. The doubts once aroused regarding Abu Akleh are utilized in individualizing her as a nationalist hero belonging to the Palestinian people and uniting them in their anti-colonial struggle.

*Keywords: Docufiction, gender, multimodality, nationalism, Palestinian struggle, subtitling, women*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Since the 1980s, cultural studies' interest in translation inevitably shifted translation studies from merely linguistic research and brought it into contact with other disciplines. Thus, the cultural impact and constraints became the focus of this cultural turn in translation studies where the historical context has a pivotal role in the production, reception, and acceptance of a translation. Moreover, cultural studies incorporated the comprehension of gender and cultural complexities into the field of translation. Simon (1996) views translation from the perspective of gender studies, setting the stage for a productive discussion of feminist theory.

It is argued that the relationship between women and nationalism is convoluted. McClintock (1991) viewed that "All nationalisms are gendered, all are invented, and all are dangerous" (104). This signals the political ideology behind the relationship between gender and nationalism. Nationalist theorists, according to McClintock (1991), proposed that nationalism affects the discrepancy in gender power in societies as men are given a privileged status in comparison to women. This notion is no longer restricted to textual materials and may be expressed through a variety of verbal and visual tools.

As a reaction to the plethora of resources used in the world's heavily codified communication, multimodality has developed in the last two decades. Adami (2017) views that it is the combination of different semiotic resources, modes, texts, and communicative events. Due to rapid technological advancements, the daily communication process has drastically changed which caused the thrive of audiovisual translation. Focusing on the effect of visual and aural resources in the meaning-making process, audiovisual translation extended the stereotypical notion of text from merely written texts to multisemiotic ones. On that account, meanings expressed across various semiotic modes whether visual, verbal, or both arise from a certain cultural and historical setting. As a result, semiotic resources can communicate specific gender ideas ingrained in our material world.

Hence, this study aims to examine Shireen Abu Akleh's docufiction, the veteran Aljazeera Journalist, who is a famous media figure in Arab households. Aljazeera (2020) states that she covered the Palestinian anticolonial struggle under the harsh conditions of the Israeli occupation for almost three decades. According to Times of Israel Staff (2023), Abu Akleh was shot dead by the Israeli Army in 2022 while covering the raid of the Jenin camp in Palestine which attracted an international outcry. After a year, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel's report (2023) concluded that Abu Akleh "was shot and killed" by the Israeli Defense Forces (15). Many Palestinians and Arabs were shocked and enraged by her killing, appreciating her work for the sake of the Palestinian cause. However, they were surprised that the female reporter is a Christian unmarried Jerusalemite who holds an American passport besides her Palestinian nationality. This aspect of her character has made some Arabs skeptical of how she may fit in their predetermined category of a nationalist hero.

This paper investigates the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) Arabic docufiction subtitled in English in honor of Abu Akleh's struggle. For this reason, this study attempts to scrutinize the notion of the gender nationalist construction of Abu Akleh as a national hero through the English subtitles of the Arabic docufiction and to what extent is this theme prevalent in the audiovisual translation.

This paper conducts a multimodal analysis of excerpts from the subtitled film to answer the following questions:

1. How Abu Akleh's identity was constructed through the discourse of gendered nationalism in the source language?
2. How this construction was communicated through the multimodal ensemble of audiovisual translation?

### **1.1. Problem of the Study**

According to Walby (1992) "because militarism is often seen as an integral facet of a national project" women are perceived as "both less militaristic and less nationalistic" (97). Thus, this notion in all societies perpetuates men's supremacy over women who are not seen as capable of contributing to the nation's struggle and becoming nationalist heroes akin to their male counterparts. The issue in this case is that women's identity is always symbolically constructed to reflect their relationship to men and project images of nationhood, especially in

a conflict zone such as Palestine which resists 21<sup>st</sup>-century occupation. Hence, women's identity in many cases is associated with the mother of the nation symbol. However, in this case, Abu Akleh as a veteran journalist is commended on an Arab and International scale for her lifelong contribution to her nation's cause, even though she is an unmarried Christian woman with dual citizenship. Thus, this point is to be further examined in the analysis of the subtitled film at hand.

## **1.2. Significance of the Study**

This research is significant for several reasons. The data under study is an official docufiction produced by a Ministry which makes it a worth analyzing source for a critical event. Also, the gender issue and its relation to nationalism is a controversial topic which is not sufficiently tackled. Knight (2020) clarifies that “much remains to be done in gendering the study of nations and in creating theoretical structures to organize new research in this area” (2).

Hence, the docufiction would be revealing of how Palestine under occupation addresses this topic through the depiction of its female journalist's killing. The study is significant since it considers the gender perspective in nationalist discourse in the context of anticolonial struggle within the realm of translation studies. As far as the researcher is concerned, there is not enough research examining official Arabic docufictions subtitled to English from a multimodal perspective using the combination of the analytical tools presented. Accordingly, this study is of utility to contribute to the evolution of audiovisual studies, particularly in the context of scrutinizing Arabic data.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Nationalism and Women: Gendered Nationalist Representation**

Nationalism has long been perceived to be a deeply gendered concept. According to Fuchs (2020) “In English, the term ‘nationalism’ emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and became commonly used during the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (236). Dunajeva (2021) elaborated that nation building is a constantly evolving process just as the national identity changes over time. Additionally, she clarified that cultural standardization is an essential element for nation building through nationalizing the population. Consequently, inculcating shared ideas and narratives of nationalist heroes and events, all serve the creation of a national identity which is inevitable for the stability of the “imagined community”. Farsakh (2021) clarified that two different notions of nationality exist: the sociological and the legal. According to her, the first is concerned with the “ethnonational identity, that is self-identification with a particular group considered to have a common ethnic origin” while the latter “refers to a legal relationship between an individual and a particular state or territory” (193).

Throughout different eras, women had a pivotal role in nationalism, yet there was little scholarly attention paid to them. Nevertheless, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989) proposed that there are at least five major ways in which women are involved in national processes. The first form is the biological reproducers of members of the nation, whereas the second is the reproducers of the borders of ethnic/national groups. The third manner is by participating in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as carriers of its culture. Women being the signifiers of ethnic/national differences—as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used

in the building, procreation, and change of ethnic/national categories is the fourth way. The final way is for women to take part in national, economic, political, and military conflicts. Knight (2020) signals that “elaboration on these themes has since remained fertile ground for gendered studies of nationalism” (5). Throughout different periods of history, these roles can be clearly manifested especially in a nation’s anticolonial struggle. Palestine is an evident example where women have enrolled in twentieth-century resistance against the Israeli occupation.

## **2.2. Settler Colonialism and Zionism: Palestine**

The entanglement of Zionism and colonialism has been manifested in multiple manners over the previous century. Initially, colonialism attempts to inflict one people's will on another besides utilizing the resources of the colonized people for the profit of the colonizer. Through different tactics, settler colonialism emerges from colonialism. Seeking the establishment of a new Jewish state, Zionism which is an ideology and a political movement exercises regular and aggressive ways of dispossession, erasure, and land annexation on the indigenous people in Palestine. According to Dana and Jarbawi (2017), “The violent birth of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent colonization of the entirety of the land of Palestine after the 1967 war are indeed reflections of Zionism’s successes in fulfilling its settler-colonial ambitions in Palestine” (1). Just like previous settler colonial movements, the indigenous people’s land occupation for Zionism is an unnegotiable necessity. These settlements are intentionally planned to produce a new onsite reality to avoid international condemnation whilst establishing territorial colonization, and accordingly forever changing the demographic map in Palestine.

In response to this situation, Palestinian anticolonial resistance has been exhibited in different manners. Dana and Jarbawi (2017) highlighted that “Palestinians believed that their national identity and political self-determination were inalienable rights, echoed in their fierce struggle against both the British colonial mandate and the Zionist movement in the first half of the twentieth century” (4). Such notions can be vividly represented in audiovisual products creating the meaning designed by the filmmakers through different genres.

## **2.3. Audiovisual and Docufiction as a Genre**

Since the middle of the twenty-first century, there has been a growing digitization of audiovisual commodities, with a diversity of genres catering to different audiences. According to Diaz Cintas and Remael (2021), “films are complex multisemiotic texts in which different modes, the term used to refer to the visual and/or aural encodings of different semiotic systems, cooperate to create potential meaning for the viewer” (64). Even though the merger between fiction and nonfiction might seem a relatively contemporary idea, this docufictional blend was at its peak during the early cinema period ranging between 1893 and 1905. The term ‘docufiction’ has come to light since the 80’s. However, it is known that this fusion between documentary and fiction is not a novel invention.

There are various and intermingling ways of defining docufiction, yet Springer and Rhodes (2006) proposed that there are four main genres in film history. It is relevant to state that trials restricting films’ genres to a particular category would be inadequate because the real

world's elements are more intertwined and thus harder to be sharply separated. As a result of new trends in audiovisual products brought forth by technological advancements, translation studies have had to adjust to accommodate the heavily coded material produced with its various dimensions.

#### **2.4. Audiovisual Translation and Multimodality: Subtitling**

It is needless to mention that the creation and translation of audiovisual material rely on combinations of many semiotic aspects. Hence, difficulties in interpreting those elements might result in miscommunication. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) explained that communication in our contemporary societies has not only been based more on images but has become more multimodal. Munday (2022) explained that “the term multimodality is used both to refer to a field of research (also called ‘Multimodal Studies’) and a phenomenon of communication that combines different modes, such image, speech, writing or gesture” (235). It has become a thriving research area. According to Ledin and Machin (2018) multimodality is perceived as a “term that often has been used in place of social semiotics and that emerged from the mid-1990s” (39). The combined complexity of the source text in media products implies that, although the source language aspects may be more easily catered to the target audience, the nonverbal elements pose greater obstacles for translators. It is worth mentioning that numerous scholars have expressed interest in studying multimodality and subtitling as a result of the revolutionary impact of this field in translation studies.

#### **2.5. Previous Studies**

This section briefly sheds light on earlier studies related to the research topic discussed herein. The first case is a qualitative study presented by Ahmed (2016). It explored the role of subtitling and visual images in shaping the history of the Arab "Other", with particular stress on the Egyptian context. She used Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis and Lefevre's (2002) textual and conceptual grids, to examine “Egypt's Stolen Billions” BBC documentary. It investigated Egyptian assets plundered by Mubarak's regime. Focusing on certain shots from the documentary, the researcher analyzed and compared the English subtitles to the Arabic source language, examined the visuals, and explored how both contributed to creating the Other's history. In her research, Ahmed (2016) concluded that utilizing these tools led to shaping a negative image of the Egyptian Other and its history after the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution.

Another case study was conducted by Mubaraki (2019) who examined the subtitling process of extracts of four contemporary Egyptian films - screened in different years - into English. The chosen films were: Karkar, Wesh Egram, Sayed El Atefy, and Hameya fi KG2. She abided by a multimodal theoretical framework with the corpus analysis, focusing on subtitling linguistic varieties and their communicative meanings in these audiovisual products. She utilized Ramos Pinto's (2016) strategies used to translate linguistic varieties in the target text through three modes: the spoken mode, the *mise-en scène* mode, and the subtitles mode.

Furthermore, Al-Adwan and Thawabteh (2021) utilized a comparative linguistic analysis of the Arabic dialogues and English subtitles of the Egyptian film “Noom El Talat” screened on Netflix. The researchers focused on selecting all metaphorical expressions that would mostly be challenging when subtitled into English. They used the taxonomy of strategies

developed by Pedersen (2018) to classify the identified strategies chosen by subtitlers and their frequency. This study also used the idea of semantic frames as a framework to organize the linguistic analysis. The results showed that reduction to sense, image substitution, image transfer, and omission were the most commonly used strategies in translating metaphorical expressions into English. They concluded that studying the cultural context from which Arabic metaphorical expressions emerged was proven to be a necessity in the subtitling process. However, this study did not pay attention to the nonverbal aspect of the film.

Despite all of the progress achieved, earlier research has left a gap which is addressed in this paper. There is an obvious deficiency in scrutinizing official audiovisual materials created by Arab ministries which are also subtitled into English. The integration of verbal and visual analysis to expound on docufilms tackling gender and nationalism in an Arab country is evidently lacking. Consequently, the need to discuss these concepts, especially in the conditions of a colonized country would yield valuable results in this field.

### **3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Data Description**

The docufiction under study is entitled “Jerusalem’s Star: Shireen Abu Akleh” produced by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) in Palestine and streamed on their official YouTube channel in June 2022. It is 9 minutes long. The docufiction narrates the shooting of Abu Akleh while reporting the Israeli raid in Jenin, while showing live excerpts of the incident as well as enacting fictional scenes for Abu Akleh helping a Palestinian mother of an ill child in need. The characters speak Palestinian Arabic while having some incidents where the narrator or Abu Akleh’s thoughts are being recounted in Modern Standard Arabic. This docufiction is subtitled in English.

#### **3.2. Methodology**

This is a qualitative study using a multimodal approach in the analysis of the docufiction at hand whilst investigating the interplay between different verbal and nonverbal elements and the strategies used in the subtitling process to reflect the meaning created by their interaction. Thus, certain shots from the docufiction presenting Abu Akleh are chosen in table format to be contextualized. For the purpose of this study, only selected excerpts from the docufiction featuring Abu Akleh’s national and religious background as well as her preparation for covering the Jenin raid are examined.

Firstly, a multimodal analysis is conducted based on Ledin and Machin's (2020) model in examining the film from a nonverbal perspective. The result of this analysis would highlight any discrepancies or otherwise similarities between the meaning rendered in the verbal and nonverbal modes. Secondly, the verbal aspect is investigated by utilizing Diaz Cintas and Remael's (2014) subtitling strategies.

Ledin and Machin (2020) present a recent tool of visual analysis. It is also a practical and organized toolkit for thoroughly examining audiovisual products. Moreover, this model employs specific tools for examining action in images which serves well for the nature of the continuous shots in films. This toolkit also provides detailed steps catering to representing participants in images. Thus, the two multimodal tools prove to be user-friendly in providing



deep analysis for the characters' representation and conveying meaning in the docufiction through inspecting moving images.

As for the verbal perspective, Diaz Cintas and Remael's (2014) subtitling strategies are employed in this study as they are a relatively up-to-date tool. They devise practical and comprehensive strategies to deliver the desired meaning in the target language on screen while overcoming temporal and spatial constraints. Added to that, the variety of subtitling strategies proposed makes it very convenient to translate specific cultural terms in audiovisual works.

Firstly, for more in-depth scrutiny of the frames, the selected shots are contextualized to provide viewers with a clear understanding of the scene from which they are extracted. For the sake of maintaining the flow of events, the selected shots are displayed in chronological order. In regards to the visual perspective, Ledin and Machin (2020) have taken from Van Leeuwen (1996) and Machin and Mayr (2012) models to propose different elements examining representing participants in images. They mention five ones: individuals and groups, distance, categorization, anonymization, and none representation.

The first element is concerned with the visual presentation of people whether in groups or as individual participants. When portrayed collectively, people may seem more homogenized to varying degrees in regard to their appearance. This gives the audience more or less the same impression about these members in an image.

Distance, in this case, is about the size of the frame. If the shot is close, medium, or long, it gives a certain association of physical proximity between the viewer and the represented participant. Therefore, a longer shot is far more impersonal, while a closer shot conveys intimacy.

Categorization is the portrayal of individuals using characteristics that reinforce specific stereotypes. These attributes can fall under cultural or biological categorization or both. Anonymization is apparent when the viewers see people in an image, but important facets of their identities are hidden or out of focus. This may be to highlight specific ideas and meanings apart from people's appearance.

The last element, none representation, is the lack of a participant's visual appearance. It can be utilized to dismiss a participant's involvement in certain situations or to conceal accountability for one's actions. Given the nature of films, the audience sees moving pictures depicting events taking place. Ledin and Machin (2020) present specific tools for the analysis of action in images which comprise four processes. They are emotional, mental, verbal, and material processes.

The emotional process is conveyed when a person's facial gestures and body posture indicate their feelings and mood. Resembling the emotional process, the mental process communicates a person's inner thoughts again shown through their poses and facial expressions. As demonstrated, in this case, people depicted in an image may be shown looking outside the image's frame, indicating that they are thinking about future chances and probabilities. In analyzing the mental process, the settings and objects in an image are of importance as they give cues explaining one's mental state.

The third type of process is the verbal one. It focuses on who appears to be talking in an image. Therefore, it highlights the communicative process in a certain scene. The last type of process is the material one. Material processes take place when an image indicates that an action is happening with certain outcomes.

The subtitling strategies used for the examination of the target text are proposed by Diaz Cintas and Remael (2014). They introduce 9 subtitling strategies which are: loan, literal translation or calque, explicitation, substitution, transposition, lexical recreation, compensation omission, and addition. For the purpose of this study, only eight strategies of the abovementioned will be utilized in examining the English subtitles of the Arabic audio in the film, as the lexical recreation strategy will not be of use in this scope.

Consequently, representing participants and action in images toolkit (2020) are used to conduct an in-depth analysis of the nonverbal aspect along with the subtitling strategies (2014) examining the verbal aspect of the film. These combined tools are employed to highlight the multimodal analysis of the film and to unleash the meanings embedded in these codes.

#### 4. ANALYSIS

The current section presents the analytical process for the chosen shots. The analysis is carried out in table format to enable a more coherent and organized reading. It is divided into two stages: the first one focuses on the nonverbal aspect according to Ledin and Machin's (2020) model, while the second tackles the verbal one, using the subtitling strategies discussed beforehand. Finally, each shot is finalized with the implications drawn from this detailed analysis.

**Table 1**

Timing	Shot
00:26	

**The docufiction's title at its commencement**

The previous frame is of utmost importance as it creates the audience's first impression of the docufiction and sets the film's mood in general. Based on that, the viewers set their expectations and are attracted to watch the docufiction or not. Added to that, this is one of the early scenes which are not subtitled in the docufiction.

About the nonverbal elements, regarding the action in image perspective, there are no processes in this frame. Since this shot displays the film's title with no actors, thus no

participants are performing any actions. The same applies to the representing participants in images aspect.


**Table 2**

Timing	Source text	Literal translation
00:26	نجمة القدس شيرين أبو عاقلة	Jerusalem's star: Shireen Abu Akleh

**The corresponding verbal elements to table 1**

From the verbal perspective, even though this shot is not subtitled it is worth analyzing. The source text states (Jerusalem's star: Shireen Abu Akleh) in Arabic on screen. However, regardless of the title's significance, the subtitler opted for totally omitting it in the target language. This decision might have been taken to avoid associating this docufiction by any means to the worldwide established Zionist narrative, evoking the image of David's star. Bearing in mind that it is commonly recognized that the Zionist flag manifests David's star as a representation of Jewish unity. Mishory (n.d.) mentions that "The Star of David became the emblem of Zionist Jews everywhere. Non-Jews regarded it as representing not only the Zionist current in Judaism but Jewry as a whole". This resemblance may link Abu Akleh to the Zionist movement to which the filmmakers and Arab audience object. Hence, instead of altering this narrative by perhaps playing on the title and translating it, the subtitler may have chosen to simply delete the title in the target text, to evade any arising misconceptions, considering it to be a safer option.

**Table 3**

Timing	Shot	Audio	Subtitles
03:16		<p>وحياتك لو كل جنسيات العالم ما بتغنييني عن فلسطين</p>	<p>Nothing in the world would replace Palestine in my heart, let alone a nationality</p>

**Abu Akleh in a car with a Palestinian driver**

This is the one and only shot in the docufiction mentioning Abu Akleh's dual Palestinian-American citizenship. Her response to the Palestinian car driver is quite crucial as it sheds light on both parties' points of view. The driver – taking her to Aljazeera office in

Jerusalem - represents a widely spread opinion amongst Arab citizens. Therefore, this conversation touches upon some Arabs' doubts about Abu Akleh's identity.

When delving into the nonverbal analysis, from the perspective of action in images, two processes are visible in this shot. The emotional process is clear in this case, as Abu Akleh's sharp body language shows how aroused she is by the driver's questioning of her decision to stay in Palestine rather than the United States. Verbal process is also visible here, since Abu Akleh responds to the driver's question, as they engage in a conversation about the privilege of living abroad or in Palestine.

From the viewpoint of portraying participants in images, in this frame, the focus is on Abu Akleh, as the driver's face is blurred. The individuals and groups element are present in this shot as she is individualized. The distance element in this case is signaled from the frame's size which is a close shot revealing Abu Akleh's face and shoulders. As shown, this close distance between the viewer and the journalist allows for a closer connection between both parties, to enable a better understanding of her character.

**Table 4**

Timing	Audio	Literal translation	Subtitles
03:16	وحياتك لو كل جنسيات العالم ما بتغنييني عن فلسطين	I swear on your life; that all nationalities do not replace Palestine for me.	Nothing in the world would replace Palestine in my heart, let alone a nationality

**The associated verbal elements with table 3**

With regards to the verbal aspect, following Diaz Cintas and Remael's (2014) subtitling strategies, the strategy utilized in this instance is omitting the swear (وحياتك) in the target language. However, this may be out of the subtitler's knowledge that many Arabic speakers tend to swear to validate the credibility of their words which is a more common practice in the source culture than the target one. Nevertheless, the essence of the meaning is rendered in the generalization of the English translation (Nothing in the world would replace Palestine) through explicitation strategy. The subtitler opts for strengthening the meaning in the target language by using the addition strategy in (in my heart) and (let alone a nationality). The insertion of these phrases helps in accentuating Abu Akleh's national leanings upholding her Palestinian identity to the core, no matter how hard the living conditions are in her country.

The complement of both the verbal and nonverbal elements in this shot serves to highlight the journalist's firm stance regarding her affiliation, even when her fellow Palestinians oppose her opinion. This shot is a strong response to the expressed skepticism about Abu Akleh's true identity after her killing. She is portrayed as a strongly truly Palestinian citizen who is not tantalized by anything that may take her away from her calling in Palestine. Besides, focusing on Abu Akleh in the frame helps to immerse viewers in her perspective and experience. This composition shows that Abu Akleh is an active participant in the Palestinian national movement, in line with Anthias and Yuval-Davis' classification of women's relationship to nationalism in societies.

**Table 5**

Timing	Shot	Audio	Subtitles
04:40		شباب بكرة راح نغطي أحداث جنين	Guys, tomorrow, we are covering the Israeli raid in Jenin.

### Abu Akleh addressing her colleagues in Aljazeera office

This scene, situated nearly at the midpoint of the docufiction, is noteworthy as it is the first to illustrate Abu Akleh's leadership capabilities. She directs her all-male team at Aljazeera to prepare for their forthcoming assignment. From this point forward events unfold at a fast pace ultimately leading to her killing.

With regards to the nonverbal analysis, from the view of action in images, there are 2 processes in this shot. First, the emotional process is obvious as the main actor's facial gestures are highlighted to show how serious she is about her announcement. The verbal process, demonstrating characters talking in images, is also evident here. Abu Akleh is the actor who initiates the conversation with her male colleagues about covering the Israeli raid in Jenin. This signals her leadership and seniority amongst her team to whom she presents the information and commands them to act based on it.

From the perspective of representing participants in images, the frame focuses solely on Abu Akleh's face, displaying her feelings and therefore individualizing her in the shot. Thus, the individuals and groups element are clarified. The distance element is suggested via the physical closeness conveyed by the frame's size. The gap between Abu Akleh and the audience is proximate in a close shot where her face and shoulders fill most of the frame. Also, focusing on her feelings, viewers can identify with Abu Akleh on a more personal level shedding light on the human side of her.

**Table 6**

Timing	Audio	Literal translation	Subtitles
04:40	شباب بكرة راح نغطي أحداث جنين	Guys, tomorrow, we are covering Jenin's events.	Guys, tomorrow, we are covering the Israeli raid in Jenin.

### The subtitles related to table 5

In terms of the verbal analysis, as per Diaz Cintas and Remael (2014), the strategy utilized in this case is explicitation in translating (the Israeli raid). The subtitler opts for this strategy by specifying and adding in the subtitles what is not frankly stated in the original

language. However, this translation complies with the context of the scene, highlighting the implicit meaning to the audience that the Israeli raid had started and Abu Akleh takes it as her duty to do the on-ground reporting with her team. This addition also aims to emphasize the Israeli occupation's responsibility for attacking this camp in Palestine and its consequences as well. Even though briefness is favored in subtitling due to space and time limitations, this addition functions to clearly illustrate the conflicting parties in the docufiction and set the stage for Israel's killing of Abu Akleh. Loan strategy is also used in keeping the name of the camp's location in English since it is a proper noun. Besides, the Jenin raid was all over the international news headlines, and for this reason, it has been widely propagated with this name. It is worth noting that the subtitler renders the same order effect here in the subtitles, reflecting this leading characteristic in Abu Akleh.

Both the verbal and nonverbal aspects interweave in creating this hero-like image of Abu Akleh. She is depicted as an actively leading senior at work whose orders are to be respected. Without being domineering, she shares the task with her male colleagues who in the next shot act instantly upon her instructions. The interplay between the verbal and nonverbal elements renders the courageous and initiating character of Abu Akleh in the subtitles as well. As a result, this combination reflects the last manner of women's involvement in conflicting times according to Anthias and Yuval-Davis' categorization. For certain, Abu Akleh in this shot is noticeably portrayed as an active participant in her nation's cause.

**Table 7**

Timing	Shot	Audio	Subtitles
04:48		<p>مايسة، أنتِ عارفة أنا مكاني بالميدان.</p>	<p>Maysa, the field is my place. I have to be there</p>

**Abu Akleh's refutation to her female colleague's statement**

In this scene, Abu Akleh confidently states that she belongs to the on-the-ground reporting domain. This scene is worth noting as it is the first to illustrate Abu Akleh's point of view - as expressed by her - versus her female colleague's mainstream perception of Abu Akleh's willingness to report in such perilous circumstances. The juxtaposition between the two female colleagues' points of view in the media field is particularly significant in this shot.

Concerning the nonverbal analysis, from the standpoint of action in images, 2 processes are apparent in this shot. First, there is an emotional process at play here since Abu Akleh displays a certain facial expression conveying her emotions. Her serious gaze and leaning body to the front signal how persistent she is in defending her point. The verbal process, highlighting characters engaging in conversations in images, is also evident here as Abu Akleh clearly

expresses her opinion to her female colleague. It highlights the main actor's strength in voicing the importance of her active presence in such a critical period for her country. This conversation also shows how committed she is to her work and the nation's cause.

From the representing participants in images aspect, Abu Akleh is again individualized as the frame focuses on her face showing her emotions. Thus, the individuals and groups element are obvious in this shot. The distance element is implied via physical proximity coded by the frame's size. The gap between Abu Akleh and the audience is close as she is depicted in a close shot where her face and shoulders occupy most of the frame. As a result, by highlighting her feelings, viewers can identify with her on a more personal level, further humanizing her.

**Table 8**

Timing	Audio	Literal translation	Subtitles
04:48	مايسة، أنتِ عارفة أنا مكاني بالميدان.	Maysa, you know my place is in the field.	Maysa, the field is my place. I have to be there

**The subtitles associated with table 7**

In terms of the verbal analysis, according to Diaz Cintas and Remael (2014), the strategy utilized in this case is explicitation as the subtitler mentions details not present in the source language. The subtitler also chooses to add information in the subtitles which is not literally stated in the source language in translating (I have to be there). This addition highlights Abu Akleh's ultimate devotion to her work and unwavering will to be where she believes she truly belongs. The subtitles strengthen the contrast between Abu Akleh's and her colleague's viewpoint since she asserts her sense of duty that she is perfectly fit for this job. However, this addition increases the number of characters in the subtitles where brevity is usually preferred. Another strategy employed in this part is omission. The expression (you know) in Arabic is deleted in the subtitles perhaps due to the spatiotemporal limitations. However, this deletion lessens from the strength of Abu Akleh's words where she affirms to her female colleague her indisputable determination to report from the field. Based on that, it is expected that she – as an active actor in the public arena- would definitely be present in such conflicting times.

The verbal, together with the nonverbal aspect, contribute to Abu Akleh's image as a dynamic unwavering actor in the Palestinian national cause. This interplay between these elements also portrays Abu Akleh in a heroic light where she is willing to go to any length to communicate her message to the world about the harsh conditions in Palestine under Israeli occupation. As a result, the nonverbal and verbal aspects work together to highlight Abu Akleh's fearless and proactive attitude at work, without hesitating due to the risky situation or other's fear for her safety. This shot also structures intimacy between Abu Akleh and the viewers by constructing her character with a sense of honor whom the Palestinian constituency admires. This combination, according to Anthias and Yuval-Davis' categorization of women's connection to nationalism in societies, portrays Abu Akleh being an active member of the national movement in Palestine.

**Table 9**

Timing	Shot	Audio	Subtitles
05:04		<p>بدايتها ليست ككل البدايات</p>	<p>Her beginning was not similar to any beginnings</p>

**Abu Akleh's photo as a child**

In this scene, the voice over narrates more about Abu Akleh's character in Modern Standard Arabic. This is the first scene where another voice speaks about Abu Akleh's development. In addition to that, this shot is essential as it is the first and only in the docufiction alluding to Abu Akleh's religious affiliation as a Christian believer.

In terms of the nonverbal analysis, from the angle of action in images, there is only one process in this shot. Abu Akleh's facial gestures are solemn in her childhood photo. Consequently, there is an emotional process as she is presented with a certain facial expression indicating her feelings. Since this is a still photo of her early beginnings along with the voice over's narration, there are no other processes done by the main character.

From the perspective of representing participants in images, the individuals and groups element are highlighted in the shot where Abu Akleh is individualized through special focus on her which highlights her emotions, with disregard to other characters present in the frame. As shown, the distance between the viewers and Abu Akleh is relatively close as she is depicted in a medium shot where her little figure is in the center of the frame. This shot's length highlights her religious identity through the portrayal of most of her appearance. Added to that, Abu Akleh's Christian religious clothing sheds light on the cultural categorization in this photo. The modest angelic-like apparel with a bride-like veil and a cross worn clearly signals her religious background with an aura of childhood innocence. This is paramount since throughout her life Abu Akleh's religious identity was never on the spot. Not until her death have many viewers been surprised to discover the acclaimed journalist's religion. The adults' hidden faces are an incident of anonymization where the important element to be highlighted is their generic representation as caretaking figures. The emotional and humanistic component is emphasized here to remind viewers that, aside from their religious background, Abu Akleh's family ties are vital to them too, just as it is for all families. Therefore, this humanizes Abu Akleh more, as the audience who were once confused to know that she is Christian are now capable of relating to her on a personal level where this photo reminds the Arab households -she was admired in how she resembles them.



**Table 10**

Timing	Audio	Literal translation	Subtitles
05:04	بدايتها ليست ككل البدايات	Her beginning is not like all beginnings.	Her beginning was not similar to any beginnings

**The relevant subtitles to table 9**

Concerning the verbal analysis, based on Diaz Cintas and Remael's (2014) strategies, the explicitation strategy is used in transferring the general idea expressed in the source language. It is worth mentioning that the switch of the tense used from present to past (was not similar) is more common and convenient in the target language for storytelling. The subtitler also used the addition strategy in translating (all beginnings) to be (any beginnings). This translation distinguishes Abu Akleh's endeavor emphasizing that she surpassed all her counterparts in their strive for Palestine's national cause. Her upbringing and her multifaceted identity are an asset that made Abu Akleh serve her nation in her own manner.

Both the verbal and nonverbal elements integrate to create the distinctive identity of Abu Akleh. Especially in this shot, this blend provides viewers with another perspective on the journalist's once-surprising fact. Even though her religious background -besides her American citizenship- made some Arabs perplexed regarding her anticolonial strife as a nationalist hero, yet this shot manifests this difference to portray it as a unique aspect in Abu Akleh which contributed to the Palestinian cause. This frame also depicts her as heaven's bride in white wearing a cross, echoing the Christian discourse, who dies while pursuing her nation's stability. This constructs Abu Akleh's distinctive identity which is composed of three strains: being a Christian woman who holds an American passport and was killed due to her Palestine's anticolonial struggle. Hence, she breaks the exclusive narrative of martyrdom by creating another nationalist one where she excelled.

**Table 11**

Timing	Shot	Audio	Subtitles
06:36		شباب محدث يدخل الميدان إلا وهو لايس الخوذة والدرع	Guys, please make sure to wear your helmet and press vest before we go to Jenin Camp

**Abu Akleh directing her colleagues**

This shot is significant for the following reasons, it is the first scene in the docufiction showing Abu Akleh in the camp where her killing would be depicted later on. Another reason is that this shot demonstrates how Abu Akleh as a professional journalist deals with her team in preparation for executing their job.

Regarding the nonverbal analysis, from the standpoint of action in images, there are 3 processes evident in this shot. Abu Akleh's facial gestures show that she is concerned about her team's safety while doing their job. Hence, in this case, there is an emotional process as she is presented with a determined facial gesture indicating her feelings. This process in the given frame shows the interaction between the emotional and professional side of Abu Akleh's character who does what it takes to accomplish her job. The verbal process, showing participants talking in images, is also indicated here as Abu Akleh initiates a conversation with her colleagues about their safety. It highlights the actor's role as the leader who paves the way for the rest of the team to do their job safely. She communicates with them while getting ready to cover the raid in Jenin camp. Thus, the material process is highlighted in this case where the actor does something that has a measurable outcome. These 3 processes all contribute to depicting Abu Akleh's agency as she tries to ensure her colleagues' safety amidst the approaching dangers in their press work while also being caring and professional.

From the representing participants in images aspect, she is individualized as the image frame focuses on her face highlighting her emotions. Therefore, the individuals and groups element are signaled in the shot. The distance between the viewers and Abu Akleh is quite close as she is depicted in a closeup shot where her face takes up most of the frame. Therefore, this humanizes her more as the viewers can relate to her more on a personal level by revealing her feelings. In terms of the categorization element, Abu Akleh and her colleagues abide by wearing the safety gear reporters should put on while covering news in conflict zones. Their unified look categorizes them as media reporters within the same work culture since all reporters around the world should adhere to certain procedures while doing their press work in conflict zones. Hence, this is considered a kind of cultural categorization where the whole team is depicted as a homogenous unit against the Israeli soldiers they will face.

**Table 12**

Timing	Audio	Literal translation	Subtitles
06:36	شباب محدش يدخل الميدان إلا وهو لابس الخوذة والدرع	Guys, do not enter the field unless you are wearing the helmet and the vest.	Guys, please make sure to wear your helmet and press vest before we go to Jenin Camp

**The corresponding subtitles to table 11**

As for the verbal analysis, according to Diaz Cintas and Remael (2014), the strategy utilized in this case is explicitation as the subtitler delivers the general instructions of the source language. The addition strategy is used in translating (press vest) and (Jenin Camp) as the subtitler added these terms to specify certain details for the target audience. However, there was no need since they were already clarified by the corresponding visual context. Moreover,

the subtitler used the addition strategy by writing (please) which is not present in the source language. This lessened the actor's agency and leadership amongst her team since their safety is a must that should not be requested. The addition, in this case, is also a shortcoming of the subtitler as it increased the character numbers where brevity is favored in the subtitles. Thus, it does not suit the nonverbal message in the scene.

This shot highlights that unlike what some media outlets claimed that she was not recognized as a press reporter during the raid, Abu Akleh, and her colleagues had taken all the relevant procedures adhering to their work guidelines. The verbal, in tandem with the nonverbal aspect, contributes to Abu Akleh's image as a hero who is prepared for impending dangers for the sake of her nation. However, the subtitles here lessened the actor's agency and leadership amongst her team. In this shot, the verbal aspect did not render Abu Akleh's leadership as strong as the source language. But still, the nonverbal aspect clearly highlights Abu Akleh's bold and wise character, as well as her leadership qualities while guiding her team of men and women more than the subtitles. Thus, this blend, according to Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989), portrays Abu Akleh being an active participant in the national anticolonial movement in Palestine.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

In light of the previous analysis, there are key points to be emphasized. As was explained in the past section, the multimodal analysis -in this study- instantiates the deeper meanings in audiovisual products, particularly vis-à-vis gender and nationalism. From the standpoint of nonverbal analysis, individualization, and distance elements are prominent in the majority of the selected shots. In most cases, the distance element in the presented shots ranges from close to medium shots. The reason behind that is to establish an emotional connection particularly between Abu Akleh and the audience through conveying her emotions and significant details about her. When it comes to the processes, the most employed ones are the verbal and emotional. This refers to the fact that as a trailblazing journalist, she is skilled in oral communication and self-expression with clarity and precision in both her personal and professional life. Her emotional disposition is consistently evident in her interactions, regardless of the stressfulness of the situation. This combination of nonverbal cues positions Abu Akleh as a guiding presence, marked by her unique identity and positive influence on those around her.

As for the verbal aspect, the most frequently applied strategy is explicitation. On the level of strategies, it is extensively employed to signal implicit details in the written message for the English-speaking audience. Besides, Diaz Cintas and Remael (2014) state that "additions are always a form of explicitation" (207). Addition strategy is commonly utilized, but there is an obvious inconsistency regarding its functionality in certain incidents. When it comes to subtitling practice, brevity is necessary. One could note that the addition strategy used in the subtitling of most shots is to accentuate Abu Akleh's pride in her country and devotion to her career. Nevertheless, in some cases, the addition gave a requesting tone to Abu Akleh's orders at a critical stage. This point rendered the subtitles ineffectual in conveying the intended message.

In general, the docufiction demonstrates that there is no such dichotomy in Abu Akleh's character as an unmarried Christian woman who passionately reports about her nation's plight in such a conflict zone. All of the aforementioned points lead to her depiction as a nationalist hero defending her nation in being a household name in the domain of journalism. The essence

of her enduring legacy is her dedication to informing the world of her nation's struggle through her press work. Her endeavor dismantles the widespread notion of how women should be confined to the mother of the nation symbol. Because of her devotion to her true calling which eventually led to her killing by the Israel Defense Forces, not only did Abu Akleh thrive during her life but also altered the exclusive narrative of martyrdom by her death.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

To summarize, several prior studies have examined different media sources from a multimodal perspective. However, there is a scarcity in tackling official Arabic docufictions produced by ministries and subtitled into English. Needless to mention, this study explores the interaction of various verbal and nonverbal aspects in the docufiction at hand, as well as the strategies employed in the subtitling process to represent the meaning established by their interplay. The combination of Ledin and Machin (2020) and Diaz Cintas and Remael (2014) tools proves to be effective in scrutinizing the connection between gender and nationalism in the case of Abu Akleh's national endeavor from a multimodal perspective. As noted beforehand, the source language constructs Abu Akleh's character as being resilient and professional yet also caring especially during tough times. The examined shots demonstrate how the subtitles inserted or plainly mentioned information, using addition and explicitation strategies in most cases to stress specific information. On the other hand, the nonverbal elements immensely construct the portrayal of Abu Akleh as a nationalist figure who strives to safely guide her counterparts during her anticolonial struggle for the stability of her nation. The nonverbal cues greatly contribute to individualizing and focusing on Abu Akleh's resilience, background, and leadership. She is heroically represented as a dynamic and prominent member of Palestine's national anticolonial movement. Through her own distinct identity, Abu Akleh alters the mainstream narrative of confining women -especially in male dominated societies- to the symbolic category of mother of the nation. Consequently, inculcating such a shared sociological national identity via commemorating Abu Akleh an active nationalist hero aims at uniting the Palestinian community and ending the confusion over her identity.

Beyond the scope of this paper, there is much to explore. The scale of this study can be extended to examine other tropes within the proposed film. It is suggested that the tools of analysis can be of utility to other audiovisual materials of different genres. For future research, there is a variety of Arabic audiovisual products – with different registers- subtitled into foreign languages which need thorough investigation, especially from a multimodal perspective. The gap needs to be bridged to enrich the audiovisual field through discerning Arabic data, especially in research domains such as women and nationalism.

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# **Role of the Foreign Drama Portrayed on “Netflix” in Forming the Cultural Identity: A Qualitative Study**

Shourouk Adel Abdelkarim, Samy Tayie  
College of Language and Communication (CLC)  
Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport  
Email: [Shouroukaek@aast.edu](mailto:Shouroukaek@aast.edu), [stayie@link.net](mailto:stayie@link.net)

## **ABSTRACT**

Netflix's expansive collection of foreign dramas exposes viewers to a vibrant mosaic of languages, traditions, customs, and societal norms spanning the globe. This qualitative research study explores the role of foreign dramas portrayed on the global streaming platform "Netflix" in forming the cultural identity of Egyptian youth. In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 Egyptian drama industry professionals to gain insights into their perceptions and observations regarding the impact of foreign dramas on cultural identity. One of the most prominent results of that study is that the exposure to foreign content, such as through platforms like Netflix, has the potential to blur the lines of cultural identity, especially among younger generations leads to a sense of confusion regarding one's identity. The study highlights that national drama safeguards and promotes cultural identity by fostering unity and pride through positive values. Also, the Egyptian platform Watch iT faces challenges in competing with global giants like Netflix, affecting content quality due to budget limitations. The paper employs the Social Responsibility Theory to evaluate whether Netflix is fulfilling its ethical duty to promote a well-rounded understanding of culture and prevent any negative consequences on viewers' cultural identities. Effective strategies for preserving cultural identity among youth are also discussed. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between foreign content and cultural identity and underscores the importance of safeguarding cultural values amidst the evolving global media landscape.

*Key words: cultural identity, foreign drama, identity formation, Netflix, social responsibility, youth.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the contemporary landscape of globalization and digital connectivity, streaming platforms like Netflix have emerged as influential shapers of cultural identities worldwide. A pivotal driver behind this phenomenon is the presence of foreign dramas within Netflix's portfolio. These international series not only offer entertainment and escapism but also serve as a unique gateway for audiences to delve into and grasp diverse cultures and perspectives. Netflix's expansive collection of foreign dramas exposes viewers to a vibrant mosaic of languages, traditions, customs, and societal norms spanning the globe. By presenting narratives that transcend geographical boundaries, these shows facilitate audience immersion in stories that might be unfamiliar or entirely new to their own cultural context. This exposure nurtures cultural appreciation and empathy, allowing viewers to develop a broader comprehension of the intricate nuances defining various societies. In conclusion, foreign dramas accessible on Netflix wield a profound influence in shaping cultural identity, cultivating broader outlooks,

fostering cultural reverence, and nurturing a globally interconnected and empathetic community. As audiences continue to explore the vast realm of international content offered, the platform's role in molding cultural attitudes and understanding is poised to expand, solidifying its status as a pivotal agent in the ever-evolving landscape of cultural identity within the digital era.

### **1.1 Statement of the Research Problem**

This research addresses the significant gap in knowledge concerning the impact of foreign dramas on Netflix on cultural identity formation. Despite the platform's popularity in Egypt, there remains a dearth of research exploring how these international dramas shape individuals' perspectives, values, and behaviors. The primary objective of this study is to thoroughly examine the influence of foreign dramas and uncover their potential consequences. By providing valuable insights into this area, the research aims to assist parents, educators, and media professionals in navigating the complexities of cultural dynamics among Egyptians, especially the young viewers, within the context of an increasingly globalized media environment. Ultimately, this investigation aims to contribute to a better understanding of the role that streaming platforms play in forming cultural identity, particularly among the Egyptian population.

### **1.2 Significance of the Study**

This research's significance lies in shedding light on the influence of foreign dramas on Netflix on cultural identity formation. By addressing the lack of understanding in this area, the study enriches our comprehension of how media consumption impacts individuals' perspectives and behaviors, particularly in the context of cultural dynamics among Egyptians, especially the young viewers. The findings offer valuable insights for parents, educators, and media professionals, allowing them to navigate the potential consequences of media content on young viewers' behavior and cultural values. Additionally, the research has broader implications for shaping media policies and content creation, encouraging the development of culturally sensitive and inclusive narratives. Overall, this study contributes to a better understanding of the intricate relationship between media, cultural identity, and societal values, fostering intercultural understanding and promoting a more tolerant and inclusive global community.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

1. Investigate the impact of drama as a form of entertainment on individuals of different age groups.
2. Assess the role of national drama in safeguarding and promoting cultural identity, considering its influence on societal values and cultural representation.



3. Explore the extent to which social responsibility influences writers' content choices when creating media for the public.
4. Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of Egyptian and Arabic video-on-demand platforms with foreign platforms, analyzing factors such as content diversity and user experience.
5. Investigate the role of foreign dramas on Netflix in forming the cultural identity, and develop effective strategies to raise youth awareness about the significance of preserving their cultural identity, considering educational, media-based, and community-driven approaches.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Previous studies related to the subject of the research were extensively referenced to underpin and fortify the study's ideas and construct a robust intellectual foundation. By drawing upon existing scholarly works, it provides valuable contextual insights, allowing for a deeper understanding of the research's significance in the broader field of study.

### **2.1 Video Streaming Industry in Egypt**

The research by Allam and Chan-Olmsted (2020) “The Development of Video Streaming Industry in Egypt: Examining Its Market Environment and Business Model”<sup>i</sup>, explores the development of the video streaming industry in Egypt, focusing on the market environment and business models influencing this sector. By conducting in-depth interviews with 17 media executives, the study highlights how economic and cultural factors shape the competitive landscape. It stresses the importance of pricing flexibility and strategic partnerships for market performance. Despite the success of international and regional platforms, the Egyptian platform Watch iT struggles to establish itself. The study also notes a cultural preference among Egyptians for audio and visual content, contributing to the growth of video streaming platforms.

Parbat (2021)<sup>ii</sup> also examines Egypt's video streaming sector, noting similar challenges faced by Watch iT in a market dominated by international services. Through interviews with 17 media executives, Parbat identifies key market environment impacts and business model factors, emphasizing economic and cultural influences on the competitive landscape. Flexibility in pricing and partnerships is crucial for success in this dynamic market.

Similarly, Youssef (2021)<sup>iii</sup> investigates how Egyptian university students engage with online TV platforms, finding Netflix to be the most popular among students, followed by Shahid.net and Watch iT. A significant portion of students prefer free or mixed free and paid services. The study reveals a strong preference for foreign films, followed by Arab films and foreign series.

## 2.2 Cultural Identity Formation

Wu and Ying (2021)<sup>iv</sup> focused on the relationship between cultural identity and mental health among adolescents in Hong Kong with different residential backgrounds. Their study aimed to understand how cultural identity influences youth well-being by surveying 2180 students in grades 4-9. The participants' cultural identities were categorized as local Hong Kong, mainland Chinese, both, or confused. Mental health indicators such as self-esteem, mental well-being, happiness, social anxiety, and depression were assessed. The results showed that adolescents with confused cultural identities scored lower on all positive mental health indicators compared to those with a clear cultural identity. However, there was no significant association between cultural identity and social anxiety or depression. The study highlights the importance of a clear sense of cultural identity for adolescents' mental health in a multicultural society like Hong Kong.

Ozer and Schwartz (2020)<sup>v</sup> discussed the effects of cultural globalization, which has increased intercultural contact and the interconnectedness of cultures worldwide. This contact influences how individuals form and develop their cultural identities as they encounter diverse perspectives, beliefs, and values. The research focused on Danish emerging adults, examining their endorsements of multicultural acquisition and ethnic protection and how these relate to well-being through personal identity development dimensions. The results revealed that a defensive reaction to cultural globalization (ethnic protection) negatively impacted psychological well-being. In contrast, a proactive reaction (multicultural acquisition) positively and indirectly linked to well-being through identity commitments and reflective identity exploration. The study emphasizes the role of personal identity development in cultural globalization, highlighting the importance of navigating cultural identity amid diverse global influences.

Crocetti (2017)<sup>vi</sup> emphasized the significance of identity formation as a crucial developmental task throughout life, particularly during adolescence. The article explored advancements in Marcia's identity status paradigm, offering insights into the dynamic process by which adolescents establish and uphold their identity commitments. The study showed that the success of adolescents in consolidating a stable sense of identity is intricately linked to their psychosocial functioning and overall well-being. The findings indicate that identity development is an iterative process involving the formation and continual revision of commitments, underscoring the fluid and evolving nature of identity development as young individuals navigate self-discovery and personal growth.

Alisa (2021) research "The Relationship between the Formation of the Cultural Identity of Students and the Level of Education"<sup>vii</sup> explored the formation of cultural identity and its significance in the educational context. The study emphasized that cultural identity is a socio-dynamic, racial, and historical construct shaped by social interactions, racial background, historical experiences, and the cultural environment. Cultural identity is not static but evolves throughout a person's life through diverse cultural interactions. This continuous formation

process is influenced by upbringing, exposure to various traditions, languages, and customs, and interactions with peers and the broader community. The study underscores that recognizing and appreciating cultural diversity and fostering a positive learning environment are key to nurturing the growth of students' cultural identities, contributing to their overall development and academic success.

In a study by Altugana (2015) “The Relationship between Cultural Identity and Learning”<sup>viii</sup>, the researcher examined the relationship between cultural identity and learning, clarifying that identity formation is a complex process influenced by the surrounding social context. Differences in ethnicity, race, language, social status, religion, or economic factors can lead to cultural disconnection and hinder learning motivation. However, education brings about changes, and learners' cultural identity plays a crucial role in transmitting values. The research, employing a qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory method, showed that cultural identity is a significant aspect of students' backgrounds influencing their learning experiences and achievements.

Another research by Kurebwa (2020)<sup>ix</sup> explored the influence of youth culture and identity on Zimbabwean youth, focusing on the urban setting of Harare. Globalization has significantly impacted youth and their sense of identity, changing the relationship between young people and their cultural identity. Zimbabwean urban youth are particularly receptive or vulnerable to adopting foreign cultural practices. The results highlighted the importance of cultural identity in globalization, showing how it shapes individuals' perceptions, values, and interactions with diverse cultures. Participants appreciated various cultures and identities, emphasizing cultural diversity's role in shaping perceptions and attitudes. Concerns about Western culture's influence on music, dressing, and accents indicate how globalization impacts cultural identity formation and expression.

In a research by Szabó and Ward (2015) named “Identity Development during Cultural Transition: The Role of Social-Cognitive Identity Processes”<sup>x</sup>, the researchers highlighted identity commitment's central role in identity reconstruction for new immigrants. They emphasized how different exploration behavior styles shape cultural identity during acculturation in a new cultural context. The findings suggest that analytical informational styles and normative orientations to the host society contribute to stronger identity commitments and positive identity outcomes. In contrast, diffuse-avoidant and exploratory informational styles negatively affect identity outcomes, mediated by their impact on identity commitment.

### **2.3 The Relationship between Media and Cultural Identity**

In research by Condemayta Soto, Bauwens, and Smets (2023)<sup>xi</sup> the researchers investigated how university students in the Global South use social media to express their cultural identities. Through 17 focus groups with 105 Bolivian university students, the research explored students' interactions with social media as dynamic polymedia environments, leveraging opportunities and exploring limitations. The study found that students showcased

cosmopolitan and national identities through their actions, blending self-promotion with introspection. Indigenous identities were rarely manifested on these platforms.

The findings of a study conducted by Çöteli's research "The Impact of New Media on The Forms of Culture: Digital Identity and Digital Culture" (2019)<sup>xii</sup> examined the impact of new media on cultural forms, focusing on digital identity and digital culture. The research revealed that culture is a dynamic construct influenced by societal dynamics and significantly impacted by digitalization through internet and mobile technologies. Digital transformation of culture results from individuals disconnecting from real-life experiences to construct digital identities, reinforcing their sense of self in the virtual world. This shift has an imperialistic effect, altering real-life identities and shaping the collective culture in the digital age. The emergence of digital identities influences both individuals and their real-life interactions, leading to significant cultural shifts.

Miltuze and Sebre's (2021) study "Digital Media as a Medium for Adolescent Identity Development"<sup>xiii</sup>, explored the interconnected dynamics of media use and identity development among adolescents in their study "Digital Media as a Medium for Adolescent Identity Development." They found a mutual relationship between media and identity, where media influences adolescents' self-perception and identity, and their sense of identity and processing style affects their media preferences. Adolescents engage with content that aligns with their self-perception, shaping their exposure to various lifestyles and identities through social media.

Elsharnouby (2021)<sup>xiv</sup> examined the impact of exposure to Arabic-directed Israeli Facebook pages on the cultural identity of Egyptian users. Cultural identity was defined by collective behaviors, norms, and artistic and cultural productions. The study concluded that these pages did not significantly affect the cultural identity of the participants. The study highlighted the users' awareness and demonstrated that the pages' objectives of promoting Israeli values were not met. Instead, the content aimed to showcase excellence and success in Israel, influencing the ingrained beliefs of the users towards Israel.

Ali Hussein's (2020)<sup>xv</sup> investigated shifts in cultural identity among Egyptian youth who used Facebook from 2011 to 2017. The study, using semi-structured questionnaires, electronic surveys, and the Egyptian cultural identity scale, along with in-depth interviews with active users, defined Egyptian cultural identity by distinctive cultural traits, language, religion, authenticity, and affiliation values. The study concluded that Facebook significantly altered Egyptian cultural identity, introducing a distorted technological culture that jeopardized traditional identity within a global context. The platform promoted liberation while eroding traditional values.

The research study by Khan "Media Impacts on Culture Identity" (2013)<sup>xvi</sup> examined the influence of media on cultural identity, focusing on religious observance, marriage patterns, gender stereotypes, and youth violence in the study "Media Impacts on Culture Identity." Using a quantitative approach with a sample from Malakand University, the study found that media

exposure contributes to a decline in religious observance, changes in marriage patterns, altered gender stereotypes, and increased violent behaviors among youth. The research highlighted media's role in communication, socialization, and entertainment while posing a threat to cultural identity.

Singh's study "A Study of Popular Culture and Its Impact on Youth's Cultural Identity" (2022)<sup>xvii</sup> studied the impact of popular culture on youth's cultural identity in "A Study of Popular Culture and Its Impact on Youth's Cultural Identity." The study found that pop culture variables, such as fashion, film, television, and music, strongly influence young people's cultural identities, leading to an attraction to new cultures and acceptance of popular trends. New media and social media positively affected engagement with popular culture, and traditional values, fashion, and ethnicity also shaped cultural identities. Media globalization and consumerism played significant roles in adopting new cultures, leading to unique cultural identities among the youth. The study emphasized the influence of foreign films, television, and popular events on young people's perceptions and attitudes towards ethnicity, language, music, and festivals.

The study by Radwan named "Effect of Social Media Usage on the Cultural Identity of Rural People: A Case Study of Bamha Village, Egypt" (2022)<sup>xviii</sup> focused on the influence of social media on cultural identity among rural individuals in Bamha village, Egypt, involving 360 respondents. The research revealed that 40% of respondents experienced a significant change in their cultural identity due to social media usage. It also identified significant relationships between certain independent variables and the extent of cultural identity change. The study emphasized the importance of promoting critical thinking skills and self-directed learning among students, providing meaningful media content that preserves societal values, leveraging social media for community-based initiatives and awareness campaigns, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders to maximize the positive impact of social media while minimizing its negative effects on cultural identity.

Galal (2019)<sup>xix</sup> investigated the rise of Android applications and their implications for the cultural identity of young individuals in Egypt, using structured questionnaires as the primary research method. The study found that engaging with satellite channels via Android applications negatively influenced Egyptian societal values, customs, and traditions, with an incidence rate of 53.5%. This impact extended to Arab identity among the youth, with 35.5% of participants perceiving minimal impact on traditional practices of Egyptian families. Additionally, 44.9% of respondents believed that viewing satellite channels through Android applications marginally influenced Arab identity, as young individuals showed a tendency to imitate traits from foreign media sources. Furthermore, 55% of participants acknowledged that consuming satellite channels via Android applications somewhat distanced individuals from a sense of communal connection, as prolonged engagement with these applications led to detachment from physical social interactions.

## 2.4 The Effect of Foreign Drama on Cultural Identity

Behçetoğulları “Pakistan’s Cultural Identity in the Era of Netflix: Perspectives of EMU’s Pakistani Students.” (2020)<sup>xx</sup> explored the cultural identity of Pakistani young adults in relation to their usage of Netflix. Due to the lack of local media targeting young adults in Pakistan, these individuals are exposed to adult-oriented local and international content, alongside political and social factors influencing their cultural identity development. The study involved 15 Pakistani undergraduate students aged 18-25 at the Eastern Mediterranean University. Semi-structured interviews and textual analysis revealed that participants primarily associate their cultural identity with Islam but seek to challenge conservative aspects of it. They use Netflix to access international content, which exerts some influence on them but has not significantly impacted their core values.

Abderrazag and Kazi-Tani, “The Negative Influence of Turkish Series’ Dubbing on Algerian Adolescents.” (2018)<sup>xxi</sup> examined the effects of Turkish dubbed dramas on Algerian adolescents using questionnaires with 50 participants. The findings revealed that the main motivations for watching these series were entertainment, actor performances, cultural curiosity, and interesting storylines. Some participants reported an increased desire for personal freedom and lifestyle changes, including imitating characters' clothing styles and attempting to learn Turkish cuisine.

Mabrouk (2023)<sup>xxii</sup> conducted a descriptive study that investigated the relationship between watching foreign series on satellite channels and identity dispersion among university youth. Using questionnaires and identity dispersion measures, the study surveyed 300 individuals from various universities. The findings revealed a positive association between the frequency of exposure to foreign series and identity dispersion, with no significant differences based on gender or university affiliation.

Ibrahim (2023)<sup>xxiii</sup> examined the effect of watching foreign series on Netflix on the identity dispersion of Egyptian university youth. The study found a positive relationship between the frequency of exposure to foreign series and identity dispersion. It also highlighted negative values portrayed in Netflix dramas, such as patriarchy, belittlement of women, and the normalization of divorce. Besides, Abbas (2023, p.69)<sup>xxiv</sup> investigated Netflix's role in shaping global perceptions of Arabs and Muslims. The study revealed that Netflix's Arabic content contributed to a more positive perception of Arabs and Muslims, but acknowledged the presence of other influencing factors.

Al-Borgy (2022)<sup>xxv</sup> examined the values and behaviors depicted in films exclusively produced by Netflix. The study found that most "positive directional values" were perceived as "positively motivating and supportive" by 81.3% of respondents, with "love" being a predominant value. However, "negative behaviors" related to "freedom of sexual relations" were also prominent, often depicted with a "positive stimulating approach" in the films. The

study raised concerns about the potential impact on cultural identity and traditions within Egyptian and Arab societies.

The objective of a study by Badawy, Ismail and Elsheikh (2019)<sup>xxvi</sup> is to ascertain the impact of exposure to Indian dubbed dramas on the cultural identity of Egyptian girls. Using a survey method, the study involved 450 female secondary school students. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between the frequency of viewership of Indian dubbed dramas and cultural identity levels, with variations based on the type of education the respondents were receiving.

A study by Ahmed (2022)<sup>xxvii</sup> revealed that motivations for watching and engagement levels significantly impact perceptions of cultural identity among Egyptian youth. Using structured questionnaires, the study found that watching satellite channels through Android applications negatively affects Egyptian values, customs, and traditions, with a significant portion of respondents believing that these applications marginally influence Arab identity. The prolonged engagement with these applications was also found to contribute to a sense of detachment from physical social interactions.

Equally, Nahle and Abdulmutallab (2022)<sup>xxviii</sup> explored the link between adolescents' engagement with digital platform content and its influence on their cultural identity. Focusing on drama content available on Netflix, the study analyzed 450 items during the initial academic year in Egyptian universities, using questionnaires and a cultural identity scale to evaluate participants. Key findings indicated that 27.1% exhibited weak engagement, 46.4% moderate engagement, and 26.4% intense engagement with digital platforms, with Netflix being the most followed platform (88.2%). The study identified significant impacts on cultural identity, with the "social" dimension having the strongest influence (79.1%), followed by the "linguistic" dimension (75.3%), "habits and traditions" (71.3%), "religious" (71.1%), "historical" (36.0%), and "national" (24.7%). Statistically significant differences were noted in the impact of digital content exposure on adolescents' cultural identity.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 Social Responsibility Theory**

The Social Responsibility Theory in journalism as mentioned by Uzuegbunam (2015)<sup>xxix</sup>, Coe (2018)<sup>xxx</sup> and Paul and Kabiru (2019)<sup>xxxi</sup> posits that media organizations bear a moral duty to prioritize the public interest. According to this theory, media outlets should not solely pursue financial gains but also consider the social and cultural impact of their content. The theory emphasizes the importance of providing accurate, unbiased, and relevant information while promoting diverse viewpoints and avoiding harmful or misleading content. Media professionals are viewed as custodians of democratic values, responsible for shaping public opinion and contributing to the well-being of society.

The application of the Social Responsibility Theory is crucial in examining the responsibility of filmmakers towards society, particularly in the context of research studies focused on the impact of foreign dramas on platforms like Netflix on teenagers' beliefs and identity development. This theory provides a relevant framework for assessing how Netflix contributes to the cultural identity formation of Egyptian teenagers, including an evaluation of content selection. It facilitates an ethical examination of foreign dramas, considering their purpose, value, and suitability for the target audience. By employing this theory, the researcher can delve into the broader societal benefits of Netflix, evaluating its role in serving the public interest, shaping cultural identity, and providing valuable and appropriate content to its audiences. In conclusion, the Social Responsibility Theory offers a comprehensive lens for evaluating the responsibilities of digital media platforms, such as Netflix, in meeting public needs and ensuring positive cultural influence through meaningful content provision.

#### **4. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The researcher aims to comprehensively understand the role of the foreign drama portrayed on “Netflix” in forming the cultural identity using a qualitative research method. In-depth interviews are conducted with filmmaking experts to gain valuable insights and perspectives. Through these interviews, the researcher delves deeply into how foreign drama influences teenagers' cultural identity formation on platforms like Netflix. The qualitative data gathered from these interviews will contribute to a comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon. The researcher will use purposive sampling for in-depth interviews, selecting participants based on specific characteristics.

##### **4.1 Research Questions:**

1. What are the defining features and traits encompassed within cultural identity?
2. How does drama, as a form of entertainment, impact individuals across different age groups?
3. How does Egyptian drama contribute to preserving cultural identity?
4. What is the role of national drama in safeguarding and promoting cultural identity?
5. To what extent does social responsibility influence writers' choice of topics when creating content for the public?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Egyptian and Arabic video-on-demand platforms compared to foreign ones?
7. How do foreign dramas on Netflix contribute to preservation or erosion of the cultural heritage?
8. What are effective strategies to raise youth awareness about the importance of preserving their cultural identity?



## **4.2 The Research Universe**

The research universe includes experts in the filmmaking industry, specifically scriptwriters and directors, who have knowledge and experience relevant to the research topic.

## **4.3 The Research Sample**

Sampling Method: Purposive sampling is employed to selectively choose participants based on their involvement in content creation and their experience in the industry.

Sample Size: 10 Egyptian filmmaker and media practitioners.

Selection Criteria: The selection of interviewees was meticulously curated based on two primary criteria. Firstly, each interviewee possesses a noteworthy background in creating and delivering media products, particularly in the realm of drama. Secondly, their media productions have garnered widespread visibility as they are prominently featured on prominent Video-on-Demand (VOD) platforms, including but not limited to Netflix, Shahid, and Watchit. This dual qualification ensures that the insights provided by the interviewees stem from firsthand experience in crafting and presenting content to the public through modern and widely accessed streaming platforms.

## **5. FINDINGS**

**5.1 The meaning of cultural identity, in addition to a general assessment of Egyptian drama impact and its relationship to preserving cultural identity, and the role of national drama in preserving cultural identity.**

### **5.1.1 The Concept of Cultural Identity**

The writer and scriptwriter Baher Dewidar emphasized that Egypt's identity is deeply rooted in its society, encompassing aspects such as art, music, and language. It retains a distinct Egyptian essence despite being influenced by geography and colonialism, setting it apart from Gulf countries. Ahmed Mourad, the writer, novelist and screenwriter and Kamal Mansour, the actor and director emphasized the impact of geographical location and nature on individual characters and psychology, with cultural identity being a culmination of experiences that can be clear or obscured, cherished or marginal. They highlighted how drama and literature can transmit identity to future generations. The director Mohamed Nader expressed concerns about the influence of social media on cultural awareness and values, though he asserted that the cultural identity endures. Haitham Dabbour emphasized that “cultural identity is not fixed and changes with societal transformations, with media playing a significant role in shaping it”. The author and screenwriter Dr. Medhat Aladl emphasized the uniqueness of Egyptian cultural identity shaped by historical and cultural elements, and its openness to accepting and transforming other cultures. The writer, director, and producer Eyad Saleh discussed the influence of globalization on cultural identity and the resistance from communities to

homogenization. The director Mahmoud Kamel stressed the distinctive characteristics of each culture contributing to cultural identity. The Scriptwriter and director Hany Kamal emphasized the importance of early experiences in shaping identity and the role of media in constructing it.

Experts unanimously agree that cultural identity is crucial, providing a sense of belonging, pride, and self-esteem for individuals. It facilitates social interactions, promotes understanding between cultures, and guides ethical decision-making. Cultural identity also safeguards and enriches heritage, ensuring the continuation of unique traditions. This robust identity enhances personal well-being and fosters inclusivity in society. Additionally, cultural identity encompasses various elements, including language, customs, traditions, beliefs, and religion. It's a multifaceted concept shaped by history, society, and economics, fostering pride and belonging within a cultural community.

### **5.1.2 The Impact of Drama**

Baher Dewidar highlighted its effectiveness in influencing a large audience immediately compared to reading, which caters to specific individuals. Drama's reach extends through long series, though its impact varies among age groups. Ahmed Mourad supported the significance of drama, as storytelling has a strong impact on people's lives and can transmit experiences across time. Kamal Mansour agreed, describing drama's "magical ability to indirectly educate and shape thoughts of various age groups".

Similarly, Mohamed Nader and Eyad Saleh acknowledged drama's influence, though they emphasized it is not the sole factor affecting individuals. Nader emphasized that life experiences encompass more than just drama, and its effect depends on age and individual receptiveness. Saleh noted that drama predominantly affects children who may be unable to distinguish reality from fiction. For adults, drama's impact is cumulative and reflective of societal realities. Nevertheless, they agreed that exaggeration exists concerning drama's effect.

Haitham Dabbour and Medhat Aladl acknowledged the positive influence of media, particularly Egyptian drama, on shaping cultural identity and soft power. However, they also recognized the changes brought about by globalization and competition from other sources. While Aladl observed that drama shapes lifestyle choices, Saleh pointed out the rise of social media, which weakens drama's impact on today's generation.

Mahmoud Kamel emphasized drama's powerful impact on individuals, especially children, shaping their identities and behavior. He cited research linking exposure to violent content at a young age to aggressive tendencies later in life.

### **5.1.3 Assessment of Egyptian drama and its relationship to preserving cultural identity.**

Baher Dewidar and Mohamed Nader voiced concerns about the impact of American and other foreign dramas on Egyptian cultural identity, noting that imitating such content has

led to a loss of Egyptian identity. They emphasized the importance of authentic storytelling, referencing recent works like “Al Ekhtyar” and “Gazeret Hamam” that align with preserving cultural heritage, reminiscent of writers like Ossama Anwar Okasha and Mohamed Galal Abdelkawi. Dewidar highlighted the crisis of copying Turkish and American dramas, arguing for learning techniques from foreign productions while maintaining original content to preserve cultural identity.

Ahmed Mourad noted that while Egyptian drama reflects market demands, it can still help preserve cultural identity by exploring local themes, citing the international adaptation of Naguib Mahfouz's novel “Zokak el Madak” as an example. Haitham Dabbour and Eyad Saleh agreed that despite challenges in production, Egyptian drama often accurately reflects the lives of citizens and preserves core values, even when incorporating new ideas.

Medhat Aladl compared drama to an "open buffet," where diverse content aligns with creators' cultures and beliefs. His group focuses on issues resonant with Egyptian society, as seen in series like "Wahat Al-Ghoroub" and "Amal Faten Harbi," while UMS highlights historical events in series like "Alekhthyar."

Kamal Mansour praised the series "Abo Elarousa" for showcasing Egyptian cultural identity, promoting positive values, and fostering a sense of patriotism, which also boosted tourism. He noted that other series trying to imitate it often fell short. Mahmoud Kamel emphasized that like Hollywood movies promote the USA, Egyptian drama can showcase the country's cultural heritage, stressing the importance of preserving unique cultural identities amidst globalization.

#### **5.1.4 The Role of National Drama in Preserving Cultural Identity**

Baher Dewidar, Ahmed Mourad, Mohamed Nader, and Medhat Aladl shared a consensus on the significant role of national drama in preserving cultural identity by instilling positive values in society. Haitham Dabbour acknowledged that national drama reflects a portion of the diverse Egyptian cultural identity, although encompassing all aspects is challenging. Mourad emphasized the importance of national drama in imparting life lessons, unifying people, and educating them about right and wrong to prevent betrayals. National drama also serves as a means of documenting events and sharing experiences. Dewidar proposed reintroducing popular heritage figures like "Ali Al-Zibaq," who align with Egyptian culture. Aladl provided an example with the character "Al mansi" from "Alekhthyar" series, portraying a role model sacrificing his life for the country, thus preserving core Egyptian values.

On the other hand, Kamal Mansour and Hany Kamal asserted that “the impact of national drama on cultural identity depends on its realism”. Documenting a phase with a particular perspective might not resonate with the audience. Hany Kamal noted that the effect of such drama diminishes quickly, as presenting impeccable characters is unrealistic. He suggested that characters like "Al Mansi" should be written differently to inspire people to

emulate them, acknowledging that it is challenging to be flawless. Even American superheroes are portrayed as individuals who make mistakes but remain heroic.

## **5.2 Social Responsibility and the Choice of Topics that are Presented to the Public**

Mourad stressed that while social responsibility influences filmmakers' choice of topics, it's important not to overburden drama with solely serving as a tool for reform, as its primary purpose is to provoke thought and challenge norms. Nader agreed, noting that filmmakers should balance meeting audience desires with enhancing public taste. Dabbour explained that scriptwriters sometimes intentionally challenge traditional values to introduce new ideas, as seen in Ihsan Abdel Quddous' work on freedom and working women. Medhat Aladl, Eyad Saleh, Hany Kamal, and Kamal Mansour all agreed that social responsibility is crucial in shaping filmmakers' choices, influenced by their cultural backgrounds and personal beliefs. For example, Aladl's group produced "Mafia" independently to highlight heroic stories of the Egyptian General Intelligence Directorate. Mansour acknowledged that while some filmmakers prioritize success, addressing societal problems through new and provocative content can be acceptable. Experts emphasized that media platforms like Netflix have an ethical responsibility beyond entertainment, needing to promote cultural understanding and preservation. They should carefully present diverse content to avoid confusing young viewers about their cultural identity and ensure it supports a comprehensive understanding of different cultures.

## **5.3 Egyptian and Arabic VOD Platforms Compared to Foreign Ones**

Baher Dewidar, Medhat Aladl, Eyad Saleh, and Haitham Dabbour recognized Video-On-Demand (VOD) platforms as a natural evolution in drama, offering a more convenient viewing experience and possibly diminishing the role of traditional satellite TV. They agreed that Egyptian platforms like "Watch it" struggle to compete with international ones like "Shahid" and "Netflix" due to budget constraints and high audience expectations. Mohamed Nader highlighted the success of original series like "Rivo" on "Watch it" but stressed the need for more quality content, which relies on creativity rather than large budgets. Haitham Dabbour noted the success of platforms like "Shahid" and "Netflix" through subscriber numbers, though "Watch it" lacks clear metrics. Medhat Aladl viewed "Netflix" as highly successful despite varied content quality, while "Shahid" balances quality and targets Arab users. "Watch it" benefits from its ownership of the Egyptian drama industry. Hany Kamal suggested "Watch it" needs more content to compete on a larger scale. Eyad Saleh discussed cultural challenges, noting that Arab audiences are less accustomed to paying for content, which, along with internet and subscription costs, affects the success of Arab platforms.

#### **5.4 The contribution of the foreign drama on Netflix in the destruction or invasion of the Egyptian cultural identity, and the promotion of concepts on the platforms, and the steps to help raise youth awareness of the importance of preserving their cultural identity.**

##### **5.4.1 The interviews shed light on the role of foreign platforms in promoting controversial issues and potentially influencing societal norms**

Baher Dewidar, Hany Kamal, and Kamal Mansour highlighted how foreign platforms introduce contentious topics such as homosexuality and forbidden relationships, gradually normalizing these concepts through strategic storytelling and exposure. They noted that even in the Arab world, which might have had reservations about these subjects, acceptance could eventually increase over time due to repeated exposure. Additionally, the promotion of atheism and the idea of a unified world culture are seen as part of the agenda exercised by these platforms.

In contrast, Ahmed Mourad rejected “conspiracy theories” but acknowledged that certain political decisions by powerful organizations aim to promote certain products or gain political leverage. He emphasized that change occurs when there is already some underlying intention within individuals and that discussing these topics extensively may not necessarily lead to the desired outcomes. On the other hand, Mohamed Nader and Haitham Dabbour stressed the importance of the audience's awareness, particularly among the youth, who can recognize hidden agendas in the content they consume.

Mahmoud Kamel pointed out that foreign platforms tend to “blur cultural differences and create copies, potentially as a test to gauge the change in audience awareness and reaction”. This ongoing struggle is seen as a battle for consciousness and identity, with Hany Kamal advocating for the production of content that builds awareness and preserves cultural identity amidst these challenges.

##### **5.4.2 The Contribution of the Foreign Drama on Netflix in Forming the Cultural identity**

All interviewees were in consensus that the stage of identity formation most relevant occurs during adolescence. This critical period in a person's life is marked by significant changes and developments in their self-concept, values, beliefs, and social interactions. The influence of family, peers, media, and other cultural factors becomes especially prominent in shaping one's sense of self and belonging. This exploration of identity during adolescence lays the groundwork for an individual's cultural identity, which will continue to evolve and be influenced by experiences and exposures in later life.

Several interviewees explained that the exposure to foreign content, particularly through platforms like Netflix, can significantly shape cultural identity, potentially eroding local values and distinctiveness. Consumption of diverse media may lead to cultural

homogenization and reinforce stereotypes, distorting original expressions. Different norms in foreign content can gradually influence local behaviors, causing identity confusion, especially in the younger generation. The popularity of foreign content might overshadow local productions, diminishing cultural representation.

The interviews present a diverse range of perspectives on the impact of "Netflix" and foreign platforms on cultural identity. Baher Dewidar expressed concerns about the potential dangers of "Netflix," perceiving it as undermining moral values and breaking down traditional ideals through its agenda. He suggested that countries like Russia and China have taken measures to protect their cultural identity from what they view as a cultural invasion, although this approach may also lead to missing out on both positive and negative influences.

Eyad Saleh supported the notion that "Netflix pursues an agenda to spread certain values and norms through its dramas, potentially influencing viewers over time". Similarly, Kamal Mansour and Mahmoud Kamel noted that "Netflix" aims to transform social relations, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs, affecting identities on a global scale. Hany Kamal raised concerns about the impact of such content on teenagers and their moral instincts.

On the other hand, Ahmed Mourad and Mohamed Nader held more optimistic views, asserting that the Egyptian cultural identity is resilient and cannot be easily destroyed by foreign dramas. They highlighted that Egyptian culture is deeply rooted and vast, spanning millennia of human civilization. They emphasized the importance of education and strong values in safeguarding the cultural identity of individuals.

Haitham Dabbour highlighted the role of cultural strength in resisting the invasion of foreign values and beliefs presented in dramas. He advocated for promoting Egyptian theater shows to reinforce cultural identity. Similarly, Medhat Eladl believed that a well-educated individual with strong values is less susceptible to external influences, reinforcing the notion that a strong cultural identity can withstand outside pressures.

#### **5.4.3 Steps to help raise youth awareness of the importance of preserving their cultural identity**

All interviewees agreed on the importance of producing impactful content on strong platforms to safeguard and strengthen Egyptian cultural identity, especially among the youth. They stressed the need for alternative content that resonates with Egyptian values and narratives to counter foreign influences. Baher Dewidar emphasized community awareness and dialogue with religious and media institutions, along with parental censorship, to protect young minds. Haitham Dabbour and Ahmed Mourad called for financial support for pharaonic drama to foster a sense of heritage. Mohamed Nader recommended producing content that reflects genuine Egyptian characters and values. Eyad Saleh advocated for more Egyptian productions to preserve the local cinema industry. Haitham Dabbour also highlighted the importance of age classifications and parental awareness in content selection. Medhat Eladl called for a unified strategy, using education and influential figures as tools to protect cultural identity. Kamal

Mansour and Mahmoud Kamel stressed filmmakers' responsibility to create content that positively shapes public taste and the government's role in facilitating this without propagandizing. Hany Kamal emphasized the need for unity and a strategic plan to address cultural challenges, suggesting the use of public figures like Mohamed Salah as role models. Overall, the interviewees highlighted the urgency of preserving Egyptian cultural identity through purposeful content creation and active societal involvement.

## **5.5 The effect of the recommendation system and nominations on the Netflix platform on the public taste or direct the viewer to certain types of content, and the explanation of the term “Binge watching” and its effect.**

### **5.5.1 Netflix Recommendation System**

Hany Kamal explained that Netflix's recommendation system influences users by analyzing their viewing habits to tailor content suggestions, gradually guiding them towards specific types of content that align with the platform's agenda. Baher Dewidar agreed, suggesting Netflix aims to shape public taste according to its goals. Mahmoud Kamel was skeptical about the transparency of Netflix's top 10 system, implying that trends and algorithms manipulate viewer choices. Conversely, Haitham Dabbour noted that recommendation systems have existed long before digital platforms and argued that Netflix's recommendations are based on user preferences, giving viewers control over their content. Ahmed Mourad likened the system to an economic game, where new content is promoted to attract viewers, but ultimately viewer preferences determine content success. Mohamed Nader and Medhat Eladl argued that the system does not significantly control viewers, who watch content they like based on their history, and noted that Netflix avoids content that contradicts the traditions of its Arab users.

### **5.5.2 The Term “Binge Watching” and its Effect**

Mohamed Nader discussed how Netflix introduced binge-watching to cater to audience preferences, offering the advantage of watching content at their own pace. However, its long-term effects remain unclear, with any significant impact possibly taking years to emerge. Haitham Dabbour echoed this, viewing binge-watching as a choice for users, adopted by Netflix to compete with American networks. Kamal Mansour expressed concern that binge-watching could lead to users being controlled by the platform, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdown, when reliance on Netflix for entertainment surged. Hany Kamal criticized binge-watching, attributing it to a lack of patience and instant gratification among millennials, influenced by the platform's agenda. Baher Dewidar argued that binge-watching intensifies the viewing experience, potentially magnifying its effects. Overall, the discussion reflects the complexities and potential consequences of binge-watching in the digital age, with differing views on its societal impact.

## **6. DISCUSSION**

### **6.1 What are the defining features and traits encompassed within cultural identity?**

Cultural identity is depicted as a multifaceted and evolving construct, deeply rooted in history, traditions, and values, according to the insights shared by experts. Various elements such as art, music, language, and geography contribute to its formation and reinforcement, facilitating individuals' connection with their heritage and sense of belonging. This perspective aligns with Alisa's (2021) research, emphasizing cultural identity's socio-dynamic and historical nature, shaped by social interactions and upbringing.

Furthermore, cultural identity is portrayed as a dynamic entity that adapts over time, influenced by individual experiences, societal changes, and media exposure. This resonates with Crocetti's (2017) findings, illustrating identity development as a continuous journey marked by ongoing reevaluation and adaptation, particularly among adolescents and young adults.

Experts unanimously underscore the importance of cultural identity, highlighting its role in providing a sense of belonging, promoting intercultural understanding, and guiding ethical decision-making. This perspective is in line with Wu and Ying's (2021) research, suggesting that a strong cultural identity contributes to adolescents' mental well-being, particularly in multicultural environments. Additionally, cultural identity is depicted as encompassing various elements such as language, customs, beliefs, and geographical ties, shaping individuals' sense of belonging and community. This perspective supports Altugana's (2015) view that identity development is a multifaceted process influenced by the social environment. Overall, the consensus among experts emphasizes the dynamic and multifaceted nature of cultural identity, influenced by historical, social, and economic factors, and fostering a sense of pride, belonging, and continuity within cultural communities.

### **6.2 How does drama, as a form of entertainment, impact individuals across different age groups?**

Drama, as a powerful form of entertainment, holds significant sway over individuals of varying age groups, offering immediate influence compared to reading. Mahmoud Kamel highlights its direct impact on children's identities and behavior, cautioning against exposure to violent content. For adults, Kamal Mansour emphasizes drama's cumulative effect, shaping societal perspectives. Ahmed Mourad underscores drama's ability to transmit experiences across time through storytelling. Haitham Dabbour and Medhat Aladl recognize its role in shaping cultural identity, particularly in Egyptian media.

However, Mohamed Nader and Eyad Saleh caution against viewing drama's influence as deterministic, acknowledging the role of individual receptiveness and life experiences. They note exaggeration regarding its effects. The rise of social media and globalization, as noted by Kurebwa (2020), has altered how individuals are influenced, potentially weakening drama's



impact, as Saleh points out. Yet, Hany Kamal remains committed to using drama for positive societal change, stressing its role in shaping Egyptian cultural identity.

Despite its potency, drama's influence is nuanced and intertwined with other factors. Foreign movies have gained dominance among youth, as observed by Youssef (2020), reflecting changing media consumption patterns. Overall, drama significantly shapes perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors across age groups, contributing to cultural identity and societal values, but its impact requires consideration alongside other life experiences and media influences.

### **6.3 How does Egyptian drama contribute to preserving cultural identity?**

Results indicate that Egyptian drama serves as a significant mechanism for preserving cultural identity. It achieves this by authentically portraying stories, traditions, and historical events deeply ingrained in Egyptian culture, fostering a sense of pride and heritage among viewers. Series like "Abo Elarousa" promote positive values, family unity, and patriotism, fostering a sense of pride among Egyptians.

Despite external pressures, Egyptian drama reflects societal values and norms, educating audiences about the nation's history while exploring local themes and gaining international recognition. Additionally, it accurately portrays citizens' lives, preserving core values and incorporating new ideas to promote positive sentiments such as family unity and patriotism. Egyptian drama also addresses diverse themes that resonate with Egyptian society, further contributing to cultural identity preservation. By including ancient Egyptian culture and promoting Egyptian heritage globally, it strengthens cultural identity against the homogenizing forces of globalization, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

### **6.4 What is the role of national drama in safeguarding and promoting cultural identity?**

The consensus among experts highlights the paramount role of national drama in safeguarding and promoting cultural identity. Through its portrayal of relatable narratives aligned with culture and heritage, national drama fosters a profound connection between the audience and their cultural roots, nurturing pride and unity. While acknowledging the challenge of encompassing all aspects of cultural identity, experts celebrate the diversity presented in national dramas, which contributes to the celebration of cultural richness.

National drama serves as a source of inspiration, encouraging the audience to uphold core cultural values and patriotism. Characters like "Al mansi" from the "Alekhthyar" series exemplify sacrifice for the country, preserving Egyptian values. However, experts caution that the impact of national drama hinges on realism, suggesting that characters should be written with complexity to remain relatable and inspiring. Imperfections can enhance character depth and resonate more authentically with the audience.

In essence, national drama plays a vital role in safeguarding cultural identity by instilling positive values, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering pride and unity. It serves as a medium for documenting events, sharing experiences, and reconnecting with the cultural past. To maximize its impact, national drama must balance realism and idealism, portraying characters that embody both relatability and inspiration, thereby reinforcing the importance of cultural identity preservation in society.

### **6.5 To what extent does social responsibility influence writers' choice of topics when creating content for the public?**

The experts unanimously agree that social responsibility is paramount for platforms like Netflix, given their global influence. They stress the need for content to respect cultural sensitivities and avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes, promoting positive values and inclusivity instead. By upholding social responsibility, Netflix can drive positive social change, foster cross-cultural understanding, and encourage meaningful dialogue among viewers.

Moreover, social responsibility significantly influences writers' choices when crafting content for the public. Writers feel accountable to society and recognize the potential impact of their work on the audience. While they acknowledge storytelling's power to provoke thought and challenge norms, they caution against overburdening drama solely for societal reformation. Instead, they emphasize engaging the audience and encouraging reflection.

Filmmakers with diverse backgrounds bring their perspectives into their work, shaping culturally significant content that resonates with audiences. Some intentionally challenge traditional beliefs, using their stories as vehicles for social change and new perspectives. However, they must balance addressing societal issues with catering to audience preferences and commercial success. Filmmakers, as agents of change, can impact public opinion, shape perceptions, and inspire positive actions. While their work can lead to significant discussions and influence legislation or social attitudes, not all creators may choose to directly address societal issues.

Using the Social Responsibility Theory, experts evaluate how foreign content dissemination, particularly on platforms like Netflix, may affect younger generations' cultural identity. They argue that Netflix and similar platforms have an ethical obligation to promote cultural understanding and preservation, preventing confusion among young viewers about their cultural identity. They stress Netflix's responsibility to positively contribute to cultural understanding and identity formation.

### **6.6 What are the strengths and weaknesses of Egyptian and Arabic video-on-demand platforms compared to foreign ones?**

Overall, VOD platforms represent an essential development in the world of drama, but Egyptian and Arabic platforms must navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities to compete effectively and preserve cultural identity through their content. The findings of the

study align with the results made by Allam and Chan-Olmsted (2020, pp.15-16) and Parbat (2021, p. 18) that international and regional video streaming services have gained substantial popularity among audiences. However, the Egyptian platform, Watch iT, faces difficulties in establishing a strong presence in the market.

Egyptian and Arabic Video-On-Demand (VOD) platforms offer convenience and showcase original content like "Rivo," demonstrating creativity. They benefit from regional popularity, particularly in the Arab region. However, compared to foreign platforms like "Netflix" and "Shahid," they face challenges. These include maintaining content diversity and quality, uncertain subscriber numbers, and cultural differences regarding paid content. Yet, opportunities exist for investing in creativity, targeting specific audiences, and capitalizing on potential growth in the VOD market. Challenges include competition with international platforms, subscription barriers, and ensuring a consistent flow of quality content to retain viewer interest.

### **6.7 How do foreign dramas on Netflix contribute to forming cultural identity?**

The experts concur that exposure to foreign content, especially from globally reaching platforms like Netflix, significantly impacts cultural identity formation, potentially eroding local values and beliefs. This aligns with Nahle and Abdulmutallab's study (2022), which emphasizes digital platforms' substantial influence on cultural identity, particularly through social factors. Additionally, foreign content may perpetuate stereotypes, introduce alternative lifestyles, and overshadow locally produced content, leading to identity confusion among younger generations.

Some interviewees express concerns that foreign platforms strategically normalize controversial topics, posing a threat to traditional values and societal norms. Khan's (2013) research supports this, highlighting media's role in reshaping societal norms and reducing religious adherence among youth. However, others reject "conspiracy theories" and stress the importance of individual awareness in discerning hidden agendas in content consumption.

Furthermore, foreign platforms often blur cultural differences and fail to accurately represent specific cultures, potentially impacting cultural identity. This resonates with Mabrouk and Ibrahim's findings (2023), indicating a positive correlation between engagement with foreign TV series and identity dispersion. However, some experts maintain optimism, asserting the resilience of cultural identity against foreign influences, emphasizing the role of education and strong values in safeguarding it.

Regarding Netflix's influence on the Egyptian audience, concerns are raised about the platform's agenda and its potential to challenge societal norms. The rise of Video on Demand (VOD) platforms, such as Netflix, is altering media consumption patterns, impacting cultural identity formation, as noted by Miltuze and Sebre (2021). Additionally, foreign films and television shows are seen as promoting the perception of foreign cultures as superior, corroborating Singh's (2022) research on their influence on youth's cultural identities.

## **6.8 What are effective strategies to raise youth awareness about the importance of preserving their cultural identity?**

Strategies to raise youth awareness about preserving Egyptian cultural identity involve producing purposeful content that resonates with Egyptian values, countering foreign influences. Community engagement, parental guidance, and financial support for local productions are crucial. Implementing age classifications and cultural education, along with responsible filmmaking and government support, help promote positive content creation. Public figures serve as role models to influence youth positively. A unified approach involving stakeholders is essential for meaningful societal change, emphasizing locally resonant narratives and relatable characters to foster cultural pride and identity among youth.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The research filled a gap in the literature by conducting in-depth interviews with media and filmmaking experts, revealing how foreign dramas on platforms like Netflix influence cultural identity. While previous studies acknowledged media's role in cultural identity, the specific impact of foreign dramas was underexplored. The study highlighted that dramas educate and influence various age groups, reflecting societal realities. National dramas were found crucial in preserving cultural identity, promoting positive values, and fostering unity. Using the Social Responsibility Theory, the research assessed how foreign content affects cultural identity, emphasizing media's ethical duty to society. The study also examined the Egyptian platform "Watch iT," highlighting challenges in competing with global giants like Netflix and "Shahid." The findings indicated that while diverse narratives broaden perspectives, they risk eroding local values and causing identity confusion, especially among youth. The research acknowledged the impact of binge-watching and personalized recommendations on content consumption and cultural identity. Finally, it addressed concerns about platform agendas and their societal impact, emphasizing the ethical dimensions of media influence. Overall, the research provided a nuanced understanding of the interplay between media consumption, cultural identity, and societal values.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and insights gathered from the study, several recommendations can be proposed:

- Media platforms should prioritize creating diverse and inclusive content that reflects a wide range of cultures and identities, helping viewers appreciate different backgrounds.
- It's essential to balance global content with national productions to preserve local values and traditions. Implementing media literacy programs can empower individuals, especially youth, to critically interpret media messages.
- Streaming platforms should adhere to ethical practices, promoting content that aligns with diverse cultural sensitivities.

- Continuous research and dialogue among media professionals, content creators, scholars, and policymakers are crucial to understanding media's impact on cultural identity.
- Additionally, supporting local platforms through collaborations and incentives can help produce high-quality content that preserves local cultural identity.

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