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# Translation, Culture, And Censorship In Saudi Arabia (1988-2006) And Iraq (1979-2005)

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**TRANSLATION, CULTURE, AND CENSORSHIP IN  
SAUDI ARABIA (1988-2006) AND IRAQ (1979-2005)**

A Thesis Presented

by

HUDA A. YEHIA

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
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## **DEDICATION**

To all the Iraqi translators who have lost their  
lives for the sake of Translation

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I address the issue of translation, culture, and censorship in two Arab countries, Iraq (1979-2005), and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1988-2006), and how they affect each other in these countries. I discuss censorship in both countries from different perspectives because I address censored books in English and Arabic. My aim is to reveal the types of censorship imposed on the societies of both countries, and how it is related to culture and translation. I also attempt to discover the impact of censorship on the individuals under the totalitarian regimes in these countries. In addition, I tackle the aspect of culture and cultural censorship as a part that is rarely addressed in the Arab world in general. The novels tackled in this thesis help illustrate the cultural context for understanding the chapters.

I start the first chapter by presenting censorship in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the role of Wahhabism, the faith of the Kingdom, by focusing on two censored novels: *Cities of Salt: The Desert* (1988) by a Saudi author named Abdul Rahman Munif and *The Girls of Riyadh* (2005) by Rajaa Abdullah Al-Sane'e. Despite the fact that *The Desert* is written in Arabic, I chose this novel specifically because, on the one hand, it exposes the connection between the political interests and the West as in many Arab countries, the West has always been connected to immorality and unspiritual atmospheres. On the other hand, Munif touches many sensitive issues in his novel such as sexuality, betrayal, and political conflicts. It is known that such issues are forbidden to be discussed in an extremely conservative society similar to that of Saudi Arabia. The second novel, *The Girls of Riyadh* (2005), also had a great effect on Saudi society because of the private matters addressed. The novel focuses on the life of four Saudi women in a society that adopts extreme conservatism. By censoring both novels, the authorities of Saudi Arabia attempted to hide some of the problems that have

existed for a long period of time. The best method to solve a problem is to be able to acknowledge it in the first place, and then search for a proper solution.

I chose the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to be the context of the first chapter depending on the censored novels, especially *The Girls of Riyadh* (2005), as it focuses on women's life in that country. Perhaps, there are voices that argue that women are happy the way the society is; however, I do not believe so because it is impossible for a woman to be pleased when her role in the society is restricted and her entity marginalized by a completely unacceptable reason, i.e. religion. I supported my arguments with several articles and books from Saudi writers to challenge the idea that *The Girls of Riyadh* is an offensive novel.

In the second chapter, I deal with censorship in Iraq during the eighties by addressing two censored books censored from the West, *Animal Farm* (1946), and *1984* (1948) by George Orwell. Censorship in Iraq has been exploited by the former authoritarian regime of Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath Party in several ways, including preventing the publication of English books. That is, most aspects of life were monitored by the intelligence personnel of the Ba'ath Party. To give a complete picture about the situation in Iraq during the eighties and nineties, I present an Arabic novel authored by the Iraqi writer Fo'ad Al-Takarli to support my arguments stated in this chapter regarding the translation of cultural atmospheres. The novel is titled *Spit at Life in the Face/The Other Face* written between 1948 and 1949, but published for the first time in 1960.

It is not uncommon for despotic regimes, such as that of Hussein, to put their citizens under surveillance, a matter which gradually becomes part of individual experience. That is why the reader will find within this chapter some of my personal experience regarding the situation in Iraq before the war in 2003. I believe that my own perspective may serve as an

active testimony in clarifying many of Saddam's mistreatments of Iraqis as well as ill-conceived Western concepts about Iraq and its people. After the war in 2003, a new trend appeared to the public, which is the trend of oral documentation for the carnage that happened in Iraq during the past three decades. One of the pioneer foundations that took responsibility to accomplish this goal is called Iraqi Memory Foundation. This foundation was established by the Iraqi writer Kanan Makiya after the war in 2003. The aim of Iraqi Memory Foundation is to collect as much documentation as possible about Iraq between 1968 and 2003. The foundation relies, to a large extent, on vocal documentation by Iraqis who have suffered during the Saddam regime.

In the third chapter, I continue my research regarding translation, culture, and censorship in Iraq by addressing a different period in the history of that country. I have chosen the period after the recent war between April 2003 and May 2005. Within this chapter, I include a documented biography by a female Iraqi translator who worked with the United States Army as a translator for a while. I convey her point of view regarding the profession of translation and how it is managed in a war zone such as Iraq.

At the end of the thesis, I present a conclusion based on the arguments, ideas, and my opinions regarding the relation among translation, culture, and censorship.

**CHAPTER 1**  
**CENSORSHIP, CULTURE, AND WAHHABISM**  
**IN SAUDI ARABIA (1988-2006)**

Censorship is a persevering problem in the Middle East just like many other problems such as domestic violence, poverty, lack of human rights, illiteracy, unemployment, and suppression of freedoms. No effective measures have been taken despite the political activities and efforts exerted by world organizations to reduce the level of censorship, organizations such as The American Civil Liberties Union, The American Society of Journalists and Authors, Amnesty International, and The International PEN Organization. Moreover, censorship is still unaddressed because Arab governments have not exerted enough efforts to reduce or eliminate some of the extreme restrictions imposed upon their citizens. That censorship exists on different levels in the Middle East is beyond any doubt as Cohen tells us, “Censorship is a practice that occurs in many sectors, at many levels of society on a continual basis.” (Cohen 2001:119). In other words, censorship operates in a way that enables Arab governments in general to control their people by allowing certain limits of freedom without giving individuals the insight to realize the extent of censorship they are exposed to. These limits are seen as sufficient in the eye of individuals of the Middle East because they are the only limits they have ever known. Arab citizens discover the severity of censorship exerted by their government against them after they travel outside their countries. In *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth Century American Art* (2002), Richard Meyer argues that “Censorship may be most powerful when it is least palpable.” (Meyer 2002:xi). Meyer’s argument is definitely applicable to the situation

in Arab societies as it is one of the most important means to monitor the populations and preserve power.

Governments in the Middle East follow different procedures to oppress people such as banning certain visible material including books that address major problems, newspapers that speak freely, and T.V. shows that picture “real” life. In Saudi Arabia, the situation is stricter than that in most of the Arab countries. Censorship here becomes one of many ways to maintain the regime’s power because of the absence of confidence between the government and the people. The basic principle in the Middle East is to maintain power even if the people’s interests are sacrificed.

If a government wishes to control its people completely, it must keep all sources of enlightenment away because this is the most important road to free thinking. Banning books in Saudi Arabia is one of the most effective ways in this country to maintain power and keep people oppressed. In this chapter, I address the important issue of censorship in Saudi Arabian society: first, by tackling two censored novels, and second by focusing on a new phenomenon in that country, the phenomenon of bloggers. This new spectrum in such a conservative country is indeed drawing attention due to the increasing number of bloggers who discuss a variety of topics.

One of the difficulties I have faced during the research was to find a written source that contains views about either one of the novels in Saudi Arabia. This has led me to depend on newspapers, journals, and criticisms gathered from the Internet. By gathering criticisms of *Cities of Salt: The Desert* and *The Girls of Riyadh*, I hope to present a genuine and credible document that could be relied upon when conducting similar research.

The atmosphere of Saudi Arabia is generally conservative and many matters are prevented as part of preserving the spirit of Islam. Any political activity is banned, and any type of opposition or criticism is prohibited. According to Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U. S. Department of State, in Saudi Arabia “There are no political parties or national elections.” (U. S. Department of State 2007). The ban in Saudi Arabia also includes monitoring all sources of information such as newspapers, TV, and satellites. BBC news provides an outline of the Kingdom by saying, “Saudi Arabia . . . has long had one of the most tightly-controlled media environments in the Middle East . . . Criticism of the government and royal family and the questioning of religious tenets are not generally tolerated . . . The state-run Broadcasting Service of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (BSKSA) is responsible for all broadcasting . . . Private radio and TV stations cannot operate from Saudi soil.” (BBC NEWS 2007).

While the Kingdom exercises the above restrictions and many more, it becomes important to ban books that deal with those limitations. Some of the Saudi writers are courageous enough to challenge their authorities and the books addressed here are clear examples. At the end of this chapter, I attempt to find answers for the following questions: what are the limits of censorship in Saudi Arabia? What are the types of censorship exercised by the Saudi government? How does the process of censoring these two books affect the field of translation? In this chapter, I also discuss a further form of interpretation. To be more specific, cultural interpretation that is implemented by the author himself or herself and how it connects to the issue of censorship and interpretation in Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom is governed by a royal theocratic government that adopts the faith of Wahhabism, and it is this faith that shaped the features of the country.

When I researched the reception of Munif's novel, I found some most unsatisfying reasons why authorities banned the book. For example, some writers and critics, such as Nabeeh Al-Kasem and Abdul Kareem Abdul Raheem, agree that the reason to ban *Cities of Salt* is that it deals with the changes in Saudi society after oil was discovered there without mentioning the nature of these changes. However, I believe that there are more reasons to prevent the novel from being published than that one. The main theme of the novel is focused on the changes in lifestyle in that area and the impact of oil, fortune, and modernity on the Bedouin society of Saudi Arabia.

In my opinion, a first reason *The Desert* was censored is a religious one. Munif challenges the faith of Wahhabism. I think that he accuses the Saudi government of being hypocritical. Munif implements this task by questioning the pillars of Wahhabism. But before presenting discussing Munif's ideas, I must clarify to the reader the meaning of Wahhabism. Mohammad bin Abdul Wahhab established this faith in the eighteenth century. The ideology of Wahhabism is based on Prophet Mohammad's sayings (*Hadith*) and the Qur'an only. Wahhabism adopts the literal explanations of the Qur'an and Hadith. In his book *Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity* (2002), Tariq Ali provides a detailed description of Wahhabism and the beliefs of its founder Mohammad bin Abdul Wahhab:

Began to preach locally, calling for a return to the "pure beliefs" of olden times. He opposed the worship of the Prophet Mohammad, condemned Muslims who prayed at shrines of holy men, criticized the custom of marking graves, stressed the "unity of God", and denounced all non-Sunni and even some Sunni groups. . . as heretics and hypocrites. (Ali 2002:73-74).

Wahhabism refuses all other religions other than Islam and even refuses some parts of Islam. So, if the faith of Wahhabism is built on monoideological grounds, then how can the Saudi

government explain its relation and cooperation with Americans, or to be more precise, with “the infidels”? This is the question Munif tries to answer, and I think that this is where he accuses his government of hypocrisy. I believe that Munif attempts to elaborate that the core of the relation between Saudi Arabia and America is a geopolitical one and what really matters for both sides is oil and political interests. He also questions the Saudi government about this double-standard policy. A clear example of this argument is explained when Munif writes:

\*The friends [Americans] are arriving in a few days and we want you to do your utmost for them, to work hard and obey them as if you were their servants. (Munif. Trans. by Theroux 182:1987)

Saudi Arabia depends on the Wahhabism fatwas in deciding its policy. The problem is that the fatwas issued in Saudi Arabia consider other people as infidels or atheists because they are of different faiths. One of the main clerics who issues fatwas in Saudi Arabia is called Ibn Jebreen and he has a website to release all his fatwas regarding different subjects. For instance, Ibn Jebreen allows the terrorist attacks against Israel. He says in fatwa # 5580, “It is well known what Jews, the enemies of Allah, His Messenger, Islam and Muslims, are doing . . . so, we think that this type of suicide is permissible, and the person commits suicide hopes to be a martyr because he killed, humiliated, and frightened many Jews.” (Ibn Jebreen 2007: Fatwa # 5580). Another example is fatwa # 1922 related to avoid helping non-Muslims where Ibn Jebreen says, “It is not allowed to help non-Muslims during a famine, flood, natural disaster, or curing a disease.” (Ibn Jebreen 2007: Fatwa # 1922). As for women’s rights, there are fatwas by Ibn Jebreen that deny women the simplest rights. For instance, fatwa # 3852 explains how women are not allowed to obtain an identification card because it

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\* All translations of quotes, unless otherwise noted, are mine.

means they have to show their photos, a matter which would lead to fall in sin. Ibn Jebreen explains, “We advise each Muslim woman . . . to avoid obtaining this identification card because it will lead many people to see the woman’s photo . . . so, it is better for a woman to stay at home . . . If necessary, using the fingerprint is sufficient instead of the photo because it is better and clearer.” (Ibn Jebreen 2007: Fatwa # 3852).

A second reason for censoring *The Desert*, in my opinion, is that Munif vilifies the Americans in his book. He does that by exposing the real opinions and stereotypes of the nomadic society regarding the West generally and the Americans specifically. Munif uses certain adjectives to describe the Americans such as “evil”, “perfidious”, “nude”, “Satan”, “goblins”, “infidels”, “bastards”, “crows”, “dogs”, and “pigs”. Munif gives a real image of the stereotypes Arabs have about the Americans. These stereotypes may include the fact that American spouses in general are not committed to their marriages because of the huge rate of divorce in America. Had the Saudi government let this book be distributed, some true anti-American stereotypes would be released publicly, a matter which would have affected Saudi-American political relations. The issue here is far more complicated than a mere group of negative adjectives. The true issue at hand is that the Saudi government is a very strong ally to the United States of America and the West in general, and the Kingdom gets its military support from the States and the West to maintain the regime and keep its power. Had Munif’s book been allowed in Saudi Arabia, it would have been an embarrassment to the government because people would question the relation between the government and the United States, and they would argue that if their government demonizes the States, then it must be as bad as the States because they support and reinforce each other. In this case, the other reason *Cities of Salt: The Desert* was banned is a political one.

In addition to the vilifying adjectives Munif uses against the American men who came looking for oil in Wadi el Oyoun or The Fountains Valley, he draws attention to a new trend in the same direction signified by the way he describes American women. The most effective paragraph is:

When the prince saw the Americans . . . he found out that they were accompanied by women who were as nude as the men or very close . . . Now, The prince is assuring, with a voice filled of warmth and lust, that they were nude women...no man can imagine what The prince is saying: are there real nude women wandering among men on the dock? And the men, how can they bear the women's presence without being burned? Without turning into gunpowder and fix themselves as stakes in every inch of these warm lusty bodies? (1988:391-392)

Obviously, in Saudi Arabia these words are not acceptable when describing women because they support one of the strongest stereotypes Arabs have about American women, which suggests that American women get involved with men before they get married. An additional instance is presented to support this argument as Munif writes:

Hazza'a Mijwel, who strongly grabbed one of the American women from her private part while she was boarding the ship, was provoked by Muhaisen. (1988:217)

These words may suggest that some American women do not mind showing their hair and bodies or being touched in different places since there is no description for the woman's reaction after the incident. An extra instance that vilifies American women is where Munif writes, "As I heard...all the women we have seen are bitches...they move with loose pants." (1988:399).

The title of the novel itself is unique. When Munif was asked about the reason he chose this title for his novel, he answered "I meant by *Cities of Salt* the cities that were founded in a short time in an abnormal and exceptional way . . . they are a sort of explosion

as a result of this urgent fortune. This fortune [oil] has led to building huge cities as big as balloons which would explode when touched by a sharp object.” (Baghdadi 2004). In addition, the Cities of Salt are originally mentioned in the Bible as cities of sin because their settlers were homosexual who eventually were punished. In New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, Joshua says, “In the wilderness Betharabah, Middin and Sacakah, and Nibshan and the Cities of Salt and En-gedi; six cities and their settlements.” (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, Jos 15:61-63). The idea that a Hebrew title is selected by a Muslim Saudi author to write an Arabic novel contradicts the policy of the Kingdom that forbids any type of religious freedom. Besides, the title of the book would provoke the reader to look for its source, a matter which is also rejected in the Kingdom as Holy Books are prevented except for the Qur’an.

A third reason this novel was banned is that it crosses one of the red lines in Bedouin society which is sexuality. For example, we read these extremely offensive words directed to some nomadic men after the arrival of the Americans, “Cut off your penises, people of Harran, and throw them to the dogs. Americans have interfered between the husband and his wife.” (1988:309), in a reference to how Americans interfered in every issue after they had arrived to Wadi el-Oyon. Also, the following sentence supports the previous example: “The Captain’s stake breached Ridha’i from his ass to the eyes.” (Munif 1988:461). Another paragraph reveals the sexual style in a short song as songs are part of the Bedouin culture:

Americans, where would you escape?  
Americans, with blue eyes, where would you escape?  
The sun is shining and the scorpion is coming down,  
The lizard is biting the testicles,  
And the jackals are biting the asses,  
Americans, where would you escape?  
(1988:482)

Had these paragraphs been deleted, there would have been no problem publishing the book because omitting them would not affect the overall message of the novel; so, it would be better had these paragraphs been omitted because, as Barbara Leckie argues, “Censorship, in other words, can be productive.” (Leckie 1999:3). The graphic nature of the above paragraphs is unwelcome in the Arab culture in general; besides, novels are written to reach as many readers as possible, and similar graphic styles reduce the percentage of the readers.

The question here is: did Munif make a mistake when he wrote these offensive stereotypes and sexual terms? Based on my analysis of the novel, the answer is no, for two reasons. First, Arabs do use these terms in their daily lives, but the sexual terminology would be deleted. Second, the anti-American stereotypes in general are well-known to every one. When it comes to the usage of proverbs that contain sexual terminology, Arabs would use these terms but they would delete the sexual term. We cannot deny that we monitor our words because “We can censor ourselves. Every human being does this automatically in the course of daily living.” (Hiebert 2000:294), but the degree differs according to the cultural background and social norms of each person. Cohen argues that “self-censorship” can happen “When members of a minority culture have internalized the values of the dominant culture to such a degree that they suppress, either consciously or not, the discourse they would naturally express in favor of a discourse that is acceptable in the society.” (Cohen 2001:121-122). In a certain sense, Cohen’s argument of ‘self-censorship’ does not apply to the case of the Saudi society because the Bedouins are not a minority. On the contrary, they are the native Saudis and they best represent the country. In addition, this argument does not apply to the case study of Munif himself because Munif does not belong to a minority in the

Saudi society unless the Saudi government took into consideration the fact that Munif's mother was Iraqi, which does not make sense either in a community that is male-dominant and father-oriented. I believe that sexual terms are censored by the Arab individual in his daily life is attributed to the cultural and ethnocentric traditions bound up in the notion of respect.

Prohibiting Munif's novel proves that the government of Saudi Arabia wants to keep the myth that its society is a conservative one and that there is no place for perversion and immorality. I believe that the Saudi government has failed to distinguish between addressing a problem and crossing a line. *Cities of Salt: The Desert* is banned because it unmasks the real problems of the Saudi society. Banning this book and other books has eventually led to deny more serious problems. Unfortunately, the Arab societies in general suffer from hypocrisy and denial. In other words, if you do not acknowledge a problem, then it does not exist. For example, if accurate figures of abused wives are not reported, then there is no need for opening protection centers because the problem is not there in the first place and the numbers are so low.

In fact, the Saudi government censors its people on religious grounds so strongly that people no longer distinguish between what is allowed in Islam and what is not. Munif wants Arab readers to cross the red line and question their governments. We can see that obviously when he writes, "Listen Bin Rashed, we would eat sand, and serve our sons to our guests. However, we would never accept to shake our heads like slaves to agree with every word they say." (Munif 1988:36-37). Questioning the government is the whole point of censorship in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, and that is how they maintain their power over people's minds.

A fourth reason *Cities of Salt: The Desert* is banned that it states certain opinions regarding the Saudi government. Munif exposes the corruption in the society and expresses some honest opinions about that. For example, Munif writes:

Fathers, intentionally, gave very obscure information regarding their sons...because the military service is waiting for the young men...however, this did not stop three or four individuals in The Valley from doing the opposite...because the clerk told them that amounts of flour, sugar, and clothes will be distributed...People stressed that these were mere lies to trap them because the government has never done that before, even during the years when people died of thirst. (1988:25)

Such overt words that criticize the Saudi government are rejected because they do not want people to realize the intensity of censorship in the Kingdom. In addition, the following paragraph represents another example of how Munif has criticized his government, Munif writes, “-And the government . . . how would they allow such lies?

-We have mentioned that over and over . . . but all of them are donkeys, my brother.” (1988:527).

The Saudi authorities have strongly exercised censorship in a different way to the point that it unconsciously controls people’s thoughts and forces them to follow the pattern already drawn. This has led to the formation of a mindset which is conceptually different from mindsets of other parts of the world.

Censorship may be attributed to the ethnocentric boundaries set by the societies. These boundaries accumulate throughout successive decades and keep the person in the same place while the rest of the world is moving forward in a very fast pace. In Saudi Arabia, censorship is applied to most aspects of life. For example, internet access is very limited as mentioned in the report of Human Rights Watch Organization which states, “The King Abdul

Aziz Center for Science and Technology controls access to the Internet. Users are unable to reach sites that authorities blocked for political or ‘moral’ reasons . . . Freedom of expression, including press freedom, was limited, and authorities took punitive measures against journalists and others viewed as too outspoken.” (Human Rights Watch 2003).

To censor the population is not the real answer for protecting a society from serious problems, because if the government censors everything, it means that it has already abolished the identity of its people and eliminated their freedom of choice. These measurements are not fruitful because “Individuals die of physical sickness, but societies die of loss of identity; that is a disturbance in the guiding system of representations of oneself as fitting into a universe that is specifically ordered so as to make life meaningful.” (Mernissi 2002:141).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia uses different tools to censor people. The main and the most effective one is the religious police, also known as the Committee to Promote Virtue and Prevent Vice, which is “A semi-independent committee whose duty is the obligatory application of the rules of the Sunni Wahabi Islamic Ideology via censoring the behaviors of the population,” according to the report of the United States Department of State regarding human rights published on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

Despite the overall censorship in Saudi life, Saudi citizens have found several ways to avoid the censorship of the religious police. For example, the new phenomenon in Saudi society is the increasing numbers of bloggers. According to journalist Rashid Abu Sameh, the number of bloggers in Saudi Arabia is between 500 and 600 both men and women who comment on different topics. Many blogs have been closed because the Saudi government considered them immoral such as “The Saudi Eva” blogsite according to the same journalist

because she addressed issues related to sex and politics. For example, the blog of Ahmed Al-Omran was closed and re-opened. Al-Omran's blogsite is titled *SaudiJeans*. The blogsite was shut down because of Al-Omran's anti-government comments and his honest opinions regarding the latest events in the Kingdom. For instance, the Saudi government banned an episode of a very famous show in Ramadan 2006 because it criticized the authorities of the religious police. Certainly, Al-Omran was one of the first bloggers to comment on the incident as he states that "The enemies of freedom of expression should learn a lesson from what happened: censorship is no good; not anymore. Thanks to the internet, it simply does not work, at least not the way it used to do." (Al-Omran 2006).

Another distinguished blogger was a woman who calls herself *Mystique*. She discusses many prohibited subjects such as sex and politics, and she also criticizes the government's discrimination policy against Saudi women when she writes the following blog titled *Rantings of an Arabian Woman*:

I am born...A man chooses my name...I am taught...To appreciate...That he did not bury me alive...I learn...What he wants me to know...I live...What he wants me to live...I marry...Who he wants me to marry...I eat...What he wants me to eat...If he dies...Another man controls my life...a father, a brother, a husband, a son, a man. Then...Then...They tell me when I die. I am going to be judged on my man-made life...I can't be judged...I'll never be judged...It is just another rant...buried in the Kingdom of Sand. (Mystique 2006)

Recently, the blogsite of *Mystique* has been blocked due to comments on sexual matters. Another way to avoid the religious police, according to a report from CNN, is Bluetooth technology, which allows men and women to communicate without going through the phone network. It is hard to censor people with all the advantages of technology nowadays. For example, the Internet service in the Kingdom entered the country in the late nineties and it

undergoes a very rigid monitoring system. However, people have managed to find their way to prohibited websites. According to Frank Gardener, who works as a journalist for BBC, wealthy people in Saudi Arabia pay between sixty and seventy dollars each time to hire Saudi internet hackers just to reach censored websites and these websites could be either political or pornographic. (Gardener 2004). There is no question about the nature of the Saudi society, and no wonder in a country, where simplest human rights are not recognized, to ban books such as that of Abdul Rahman Munif.

While Munif's novel discusses the effects of oil and political interests over people's freedom and the aspects of Saudi Arabia, Al-Sane'e's novel tackles the same aspects related to women's rights in a chauvinist society. *The Girls of Riyadh* was written in 2005 by a young female Saudi author named Rajaa Abdullah Al-Sane'e. It was a polarizing book in Saudi society because of its nature. The novel consists of different stories of four Saudi girlfriends and how each one of them suffers from the male-dominance in her family. It also reveals some of the stereotypes Saudi people have about the West. The novel is banned in Saudi Arabia and some religious fundamentalists have demanded that the author apologize publicly. According to various opinions gathered from writers, journalists and critics, the novel is a masterpiece because it unveils the reality of the theocratic society and destroys the idol of unnecessary conservatism. Critics such as Muna Al-Bahar and Thuraya Al-Shihri were among those who praised the novel. In her article titled "The Girls of Riyadh: A Calm Criticism of the Novel" (2006), Al-Shahri discusses the real reason for banning *The Girls of Riyadh* by stating that this book "Resembles a picture that deals with 'some' of the sects of the Saudi society, in a true resemblance that was never interrupted by the creative

imagination. . . However, there are other by-elements that helped enlarge this trend. The first one is the consuming nature of the unproductive society.” (Al-Shihri 2006).

Another criticism is presented by Al-Bahar in her article “The Girls of Riyadh and Revealing the Secrets” (2006). Al-Bahar explains the secret behind the hostile attack against *The Girls of Riyadh* by writing that the author “Tried to break every ‘taboo’. She has also attempted to breach many traditional frames and unfruitful social costumes...that have become as strong as the religion.” (Al-Bahar 2006).

A deeper analysis of *The Girls of Riyadh* reveals that most of the criticisms do not address the real reasons for censoring the novel. Critics do not explain what the “taboo” traditions are or if there are specific standards that must be followed by authors to avoid those taboos. I believe that there are more important reasons for censoring this book. One of the reasons could be the fear of a mere attempt to break the conservative roles. Another reason might be that the author is a young woman, a matter which represents a tremendous challenge for the Saudi government since the role of women is so restricted. The restrictions imposed upon Saudi women are represented in different aspects and documented by the Human Rights Watch Organization in its report for 2003:

There were no independent women's rights organizations to give voice to gender issues, such as discrimination in the legal and education systems. The rights of Saudi women and girls remained captive to the kingdom's patriarchal social-cultural traditions as well as conservative interpretations of Shari'a (Islamic law). The tragic fire at an overcrowded and unsafe public school for girls in Mecca on March 11, in which fifteen were killed, precipitated a public uproar in the Kingdom...The religious police, whom eyewitnesses criticized for hampering rescue efforts at the school because the fleeing girls were not properly attired in the customary *abayas* and head coverings. (Human Rights Watch Report 2003)

The fact that the restrictions mentioned above are somewhat breached by the young author of *The Girls of Riyadh* sheds light upon the rights of women and the possibilities that women would call for more effective roles in the Saudi society, a matter which contradicts with the basics of Wahhabism. There is a difference between religion and traditions in the societies of the Middle East, but people sometimes merge both sides in a way that makes it impossible to tell the genuine aspects of either. For example, wearing the ‘Burqi’ or the complete dress that covers women from top to bottom including the face is not part of Islam. It is stated in the Qur’an that women should cover their hair and body in any way that ensures there are no parts overt or suggestive and seductive to men. However, what we find now in some Arabic countries, such as in Saudi Arabia, is that the law stipulates that women be completely covered. Each country has its own policy, and that is understandable.

If we come to some of the controversial paragraphs in the novel, we would find new issues that are forbidden to be mentioned. The following provides a good example as Al-Sane’e writes:

Lamees and Michelle had drinks that night. They drank an expensive bottle of Champagne, which the latter took from her father’s cupboard specified for certain occasions. Michelle knew a lot about Brandy, Vodka, wine, and other types of alcohol. (2006:26).

This paragraph crosses one of the red lines because in Saudi Arabia, the myth is that alcohol does not exist. Another essential issue in the Saudi society is that of engagement and marriage represented in the story of one of the friends named Sadeem and her fiancé named Waleed. Sadeem’s story focuses on how some Arab men would betray their future wives by taking advantage of women. Al-Sane’e comments on this unaddressed issue in Saudi society, and in Arab societies in general. To address the behavior of some men is beyond dispute

because, as we see in the novel, women get punished in many instances and men get away with no consequences. In some Arab countries, men who rape women often receive reduced sentences. To support my argument, I present a citation from the report of Human Rights Watch Organization in 2007 regarding women's situation in Palestine. The report states, "Outdated and lenient laws that provide a reduction in penalty to . . . relieve rapists who agree to marry their victims from any criminal prosecution." (Human Rights Watch 2007:481). Also, a similar law is adopted in Syria as "The penal code allows a judge to suspend punishment for a rapist if the rapist chooses to marry his victim." (ibid: 517).

In Arab societies, couples follow a specific tradition during engagements and weddings. In some Arab countries such as Iraq, a couple that wants to get married must go to both the court and the religious cleric to verify the marriage contract. After that, there is a ceremony to announce the wedding. During the period between the court and the actual date of the ceremony, there is a space of time for both the husband and wife to get to know each other physically, emotionally, and spiritually. In other words, they may kiss, touch, and hold, but not to have sexual intercourse, in order to give themselves some time to adjust to the new situation since most young people live without any intercourse in their entire life prior to marriage. However, what some Arab men do is that they take advantage of the fiancée's feelings and have intercourse, which is a highly sensitive issue in the Arab world because a woman's chastity is her marriage pass and a proof of honor. As the wedding day approaches, men end the engagement and divorce their wives under the pretext that they are not virgins. This issue needs to be addressed because there are many real stories and no one is willing to step up and acknowledge. Al-Sane'e is courageous enough to shed light upon this issue when she writes:

Did she [Sadeem] commit a mistake when she gave herself to him [Waleed] before the marriage? . . . Is this issue what made him avoid her since then? But why? Is not he religiously her husband since the cleric announced that? Why did he force her to commit this mistake and then dump her? . . . Was what happened a mistake in the first place? . . . Who would draw for her the fine line between what is right and wrong? Does this fine line in religion represent the same line drawn in the mind of a Najdi man? (2006:41-42).

To sweep problems under the rug is not the solution. Governments must take extreme measures to ensure the safety of women in society and prevent taking advantage of them.

I imagine that the reader is wondering what the relation is between the above books and translation. When a person hears the word translation, his/her thoughts are directed towards rendering texts from one language into another as in the case of translating a novel from Arabic into English. However, what most people are not familiar with is that the field of translation has been vastly expanded to include other aspects of language. According to Roman Jakobson, there are three types of translation:

1. Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.
  2. Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
  3. Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of a nonverbal sign system.
- (Jakobson 2004:139)

As for Eugene Nida, he presented the following statement regarding types of meaning: “Traditional views of meaning can be conveniently summarized in terms of (1) centripetal (2) centrifugal (3) lineal.” (Nida 1964:32).

I think that cultural interpretation is as important as translation. It allows the author to express himself and preserve all the flavor of the original text. In his article “Meaning and Translation”, Willard Quine supports this discourse as he argues that “For a good way to give

a meaning is to say something in the home language that has it.” (Quine 1980:70). Here, the reader does not need to worry about the honesty of the literary work because it represents a real mirror to the image of that given society. In fact, the author goes beyond the ethnocentric boundaries and reaches the climax by picturing his thoughts, ideas, and opinions regarding his society.

In *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (1999), André Lefevere argues that “Certain texts are supposed to contain certain markers designed to elicit certain reactions on the reader’s part, and that the success of communication depends on both the writer and the reader of the text agreeing to play their assigned parts in connection with those markers.” (Lefevere 1999:76). This supports the fact that culture and interpretation are correlated. However, if certain restrictions are imposed over the original process of writing; then the interpretation would lose its function.

Cultural interpretation does not have to be confined to multi-lingual purposes only. It must be expanded to include the given culture itself. If authors are not permitted to convey real images of their societies and reflect them on paper, then there is no need to judge any society since our assessments would be based on false images that are allowed only by governments. The author is the only person authorized to interpret the real meaning of his society to the people via his literary work, then the role of the regular process of translation springs to convey this image to the world because “Translation is the performative nature of cultural communication.” (Bhabha 1994:228). When individuals understand their mother culture, they become able to comprehend and accept other cultures. If people are not completely informed about their culture, fanaticism replaces tolerance and personal judgments replace true accounts.

The crucial element that creates a writer is the freedom of the pen. That is, he/she must not be censored so that the reality and creativity may prevail. To be restricted by taboos is enough to handcuff the author, not to mention censorship from the governments that hinders the author's thoughts even more. The reason extreme censorship is negative, as in the Saudi society, is that it causes the author to abandon his country and seek freedom else where. In this case, the author becomes even more hostile and inclined to devote his pen to attack his government severely.

**CHAPTER 2**  
**CENSORSHIP AND DICTATORSHIP**  
**IN IRAQ (1979-2003)**

The situation in the Middle East has always been unique with regards to its political changes and cultural atmospheres. The Middle East is a place of struggles, conflicts (political, cultural, religious) wars, uprisings, and violence. Iraq is one of the countries that suffers from these conflicts, which have taken different forms. Starting from thwarting the monarchy in a bloody coup in 1958, a period of ten years of political instability was followed by thirty-five years of military dictatorship represented by the Ba'ath Party led by Saddam Hussein. The method to govern Iraq was soon decided, and the features of the Ba'ath's policy came to the surface. Aryeh Yodfat elaborates the nature of the Ba'ath Party by arguing that "The Iraqi Ba'ath based its rule on the military elite...Isolated from the masses, it relied heavily on a strong and extremely unscrupulous security apparatus." (Yodfat 1977:87).

It is impossible, in a single chapter, to cover all the categories of censorship in Iraq during the regime of Saddam Hussein because censorship was imposed over all aspects of life. As a result, the gist of this chapter will depend on some of my personal experiences with the previous regime and on the book written by Kanan Makiya titled *Republic of Fear* published in 1986 and reprinted in 1998. In this chapter, I focus on the issue of censorship in Iraq during the period 1979- 2003 and how it affects translation in addition to the role of culture amid this relation. I also investigate the levels, factors, and results of censorship on Iraqi society in general. Moreover, this chapter addresses the issue of censored translated books in Iraq during the eighties, focusing on the novels by George Orwell titled *Animal Farm* and *1984*. By choosing these two books, I intend to expose the similarities between the

regime of Saddam Hussein and other totalitarian regimes such as that of Joseph Stalin. This connection explains why *Animal Farm* and *1984* were prohibited in Iraq and were not published for decades after they were written. The mode of *Animal Farm* is different from that of *1984*; however, they share the same theme, which is the disloyalty of the greedy governments whose main concern is power and how to protect it regardless of the price. Orwell's masterpiece *1984* was censored in Iraq because it deals with the ideology of the ultimate dictator and how "Big Brother" maintains his power. As for *Animal Farm*, it was allowed in Iraq after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

By the end of this chapter, I intend to find satisfying answers to the following questions: What were the aspects of censorship in Iraq between 1979 and 2003? What were the impacts of censorship on the Iraqi society? How can the results of censorship be modified in Iraq? I also address the issue of cultural censorship in Iraq through presenting one censored novel titled *Spit at Life in the Face/The Other Face* by the Iraqi writer Fo'ad Al-Takarli, focusing on some of the cultural aspects of the novel. Finally, I draw conclusions based on the data collected within the course of the research for this chapter. I also address the role of translators in Iraq within the same period.

The dictatorship in Iraq adopted various methods to control the country such as gathering information, military attacks against certain groups as the Halabja massacre in 1988, and wrong economic policies, in addition to censorship. It was not easy to impose censorship in Iraq because for the government to make its people understand that they are being censored, many troublesome incidents must take place. In *The Republic of Fear*, Kanan Makiya writes, "The measure of a regime of terror is the victims of its peace, not the casualties of its wars." (Makiya 1998:24). Only shortly after Saddam Hussein took over the

presidency in 1979, people started to censor themselves. André Brink argues that “When the state itself imposes censorship it becomes, not a moral but a political act. And it comes as no surprise to note that censorship is invariably imposed by an authoritarian regime uncertain of its own chances of survival- either because it has just acceded to power, or because its power is threatened in some way.” (Brink 1983:43). I believe that the Ba’ath government adopted censorship to control the Iraqi people because of two factors. The first factor was that the Ba’ath Party was concerned, or obsessed to be more specific, about losing control, thus violent censorship was the only way to protect itself. The second factor was that the Iraqis were never given the chance to express themselves under the Ba’ath regime, a matter which has led to even further separation between the Iraqi government and its citizens. Brink supports this argument when he says that “It may be regarded as forceful oppression of the individual’s right to think and to decide for himself; an aggression against the free enterprise of the mind. In this sense, censorship is part and parcel of the institutionalized violence employed by the state to keep itself in control.” (Brink 1983:43). According to Brink’s argument, censorship here takes the form of watching the individual’s thoughts and personal choice. However, when it comes to Iraq, the situation becomes more complicated.

It is well known that Saddam Hussein was one of the bloodiest dictators in modern history. He seized power in 1979 as the head of Ba’ath Party after promising some major changes in the country. Soon, the changes were revealed and people discovered the cruel nature of this new dictator and his party. The reason for imposing censorship on Iraq is one, which is to secure the government of Saddam Hussein and prevent any kind of attacks or coups before they occur. As an Iraqi citizen and after spending twenty-four years living in Iraq, I can attest that censorship in Iraq was conducted on different levels: the internal level,

and the external one. Each one of these levels has its own aims, results, tools, and consequences.

The first level of censorship in Iraq is internal, by which the government of Ba'ath Party censored the Iraqis by watching them inside the country. The aim of internal censorship in general was to spread fear among the Iraqis. This methodology was particularly effective because once any government starts to brutally censor its people, they begin to censor themselves automatically. In that case, the government's job becomes easier because "Self-censorship offers yet another advantage to a censoring regime." (Schopflin 1983:4).

The internal activities of censoring Iraqis included a variety of practices, such as monitoring individuals inside their residence and tapping their phones, granting a wide-range of authority to the Ba'ath personnel, including the authority to arrest anybody at anytime and anywhere without a warrant, and allocating large-cash rewards to individuals who report their family members, relatives, neighbors and friends even if a given person has no record of any political activity. In *Arab Storm: Politics and Diplomacy behind the Gulf War* (2006), Alan Munro elaborates this point more when he argues that "The slightest hint of disloyalty was likely to be picked up by ubiquitous informers and brutal retribution would follow, involving families as well as individuals." (Munro 2006:5).

Writing reports (*taqrir* in Arabic) about other people's activities was a pivotal part of Ba'ath policy since its survival depended on such reports. Makiya informs us, "The quasi-institution of the *taqrir* (report) is one device employed to inculcate this [fear] atmosphere. Writing various reports is an important activity of party members. For the system to work the truth value of a report is irrelevant. The simple fact of its existence is enough to generate the appropriate atmosphere of suspicion and fear, and to implicate with impeccable proof broad

layers of people in the violence of the regime.” (Makiya 1998:63). For example, in 1999 one of the Ba’ath Party members told me how he got promoted, explaining that one day he witnessed a fight in one of the coffee shops in Radwaniya area. He said that he reported the young men who caused the fight to someone at the Ba’ath headquarters. As a result, he was promoted and the young men were imprisoned. The purpose of such informers is strongly connected with decision-making directories in Iraq. Their job is central because “informers’ networks invade privacy and choke off all willingness to act in public or reflect upon politics, replacing these urges with a now deeply instilled caution . . . the numbers of victims are not as important as the psychological atmosphere being invoked.” (Makiya 1998:63). Another instance of writing reports is what is known in Iraq as the *mukhtar* (mayor in English), who is an employee of the government whose job is to supervise a given neighborhood. Most of Iraqi citizens’ papers must be stamped by the *mukhtar* as part of the routine paperwork, although this person has no connection with the place those papers are directed. In other words, if an Iraqi person needs his pension confirmation approved, he must obtain a ‘residence confirmation’ from the *mukhtar*. Also, students were required to obtain the *mukhtar*’s signature to complete the registration process in schools.

In addition to the reasons and factors mentioned above, censoring Iraqis on the internal level was more than successful because of the availability of a significant element: economics. The economic factor in any country, not just Iraq, enables the government to comprehensively control its people. The economic factor in Iraq contributed to strengthening censorship because the government denied Iraqis any benefits except for those who were working for the Ba’ath Party. In *Baghdad Bound: an Interpreter's Chronicles of the Iraq War* (2004), Mohammad Fahmy supports this point by saying that “Many people join the Ba’ath

Party to enter university or obtain a good job. Only Ba'ath loyalists are allowed to work in strategic industries.” (Fahmy 2004:63). This caused many Iraqis to betray their family members and friends in order to join the Ba'ath Party, prove their loyalty, and enjoy all its privileges. Some of those privileges included cash allowances, brand new cars, houses, scholarships, fellowships, Masters and Ph.D. degrees in foreign countries for educationally unqualified individuals, and permission to travel abroad. Besides, the government imposed fruitless measures involving the Iraqi economy in the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991, measures that led to currency inflation. These measures caused the Iraqi currency to collapse in international markets, a matter which severely affected the domestic economy in general. According to the statistics provided by the Central Intelligence Agency in the United States, the value of the Iraqi dinars compared to the U.S. dollars was only 0.3109 in 2001. Teachers' salaries, for instance, after the Gulf War declined from about thirty Iraqi dinars per month (about \$100) during the eighties to three thousand Iraqi dinars per month (about \$1.07) during the nineties. Also, pensions after the Gulf War in 1991 were reduced to seven thousand Iraqi dinars per month (about \$2.36). The statistics presented by the United Nations Development Program show that the average annual income for Iraqis was about \$255 during 2003, yet that level of income was not available to many Iraqis who were working in free lance jobs, add to that the reality of staggering prices of basic humanitarian needs.

On the other hand, the salaries of Ba'ath members after the Gulf War were about three hundred thousand Iraqi dinars per month (about \$100) for new members and higher salaries for senior ones. This led non-Ba'thist Iraqis to focus on providing the basic things for survival rather than thinking about other issues, whether political, social, or educational. One of the cornerstones that were affected by internal censorship in Iraqi society was the

educational standard of Iraqis. Depriving many Iraqis economically helped censoring them educationally because people became unable to purchase books, magazines, and translations to increase their knowledge. They became busy providing food for their families; at the same time, the prices of books, newspapers, and magazines rose dramatically. Internal censorship also included the prevention of photographing public places fearing that any person would gather sensitive information about governmental buildings. In this regard, Kanan Makiya writes, "Cameras are sold in Iraq, but photography is suspect without the written authorization of the Ministry of Interior." (Makiya 1998:3).

The results of internal censorship in Iraqi society are completely unpleasant. A first result is the emergence of generations incapable of accepting other opinions due to long periods of isolation from the world and unfamiliarity with other nationals. These generations are unable to accomplish creative thinking and critical analysis. In his book *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa* (2004), Alexander De Waal argues, "Various forms of censorship are at work. There is the censorship imposed by fear . . . there is the straightforward censorship of books, newspapers, and conferences . . . but perhaps the most insidious form of censorship is that brought about by poor education." (Waal 2004:52). Poor education in Iraq meant that the quality was poor, not the quantity. Even though Iraqis received free education starting from elementary school until completing PH.D degrees, there is still a certain part of Iraqi personality that needs to be educated about the world's different issues and how people think in other parts of the world and learn to accept difference. As will be further detailed in chapter three, education in Iraq relies on memorizing textbooks rather than critically argue them.

A second result is the spreading of chaos in the society after the absence of the totalitarian regime in 2003, a matter which draws the country to the brink of a civil war caused by political conflicts. A third result is the fact that many Iraqis are unable to comprehend new concepts such as democracy, freedom, and openness, because the Ba'ath Party adopted "a polity whose self-definition is that 'everything is political' . . . this profound metamorphosis of attitudes was carried through in a handful of years. The result is a very vulnerable populace, unable to 'think' or accumulate experience in dealing with itself, and consequently more prey than ever to believing the most fantastic lies." (Makiya 1998:61). This means that Iraqi society has not adjusted yet to these new concepts because it has been oppressed for decades. Societies unfamiliar with freedom suffer greatly at the beginning of the transition of democracy until they realize the essence of this concept. Until these societies adjust to being free, the price is paid by the most creative people since they are the ones who have difficulty coping with the rest of the society. In his book *The Tyranny: a Philosophical Study of Images of Political Despotism* (1994), Imam supports this argument as he writes, "If the person loses his 'individuality', I mean his self-conscious or personality, and becomes one merged with another person in one entity where there is no way to distinguish who is who, as in a group of sheep, his humanism is lost at the same moment. The creativity in him dies and the invention diminishes. The 'creative person' if found becomes deviant and the 'inventor' becomes off the group." (Imam 1994:6).

A fourth result is that Iraqis practice protection, or to be more specific avoidance, rather than acquiring information and the difference between these two concepts is striking. The avoidance of a certain issue means that a person actually has no idea what he is dealing with. The following example is something I have personally witnessed. I used to work at a

copy center close to my university. One day, a student entered the center holding a paper he was trying to hide. He went to the copy machine ignoring me as the person in charge of the process of copying. I reported the incident to the owner of the center directly. The owner recognized the student as one of his friends. As a result, he allowed him to copy the paper himself. After the student left, I asked the owner about the contents of the paper. He answered that it was a religious poem, which was censored by the government. Obviously, anyone caught copying similar material would get arrested and eventually killed. I did not mention the student or the poem and never asked when a customer entered the copy center and headed to the copy machine. I did not wish to learn more about the nature of that religious poem as it might have caused a problem for me. I prevented myself from that poem. Another different example is *The Satanic Verses* (1988) by Salman Rushdie. This novel is prohibited in the Arab countries, including Iraq; however Iraqis do not really know the contents of the book because it was never discussed in Iraq in the first place. But because a fatwa was issued against Rushdie by the late Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran after the book was published, Iraqis refuse to even mention the title of the book. This process is called prevention. Protection, on the other hand, means that the individual has a general idea about a censored issue and the reasons why it is prohibited, yet when asked about it, a person manages to moderate the discussion in a way that protects him or her from possible harm.

The internal censorship in Iraq also comprised monitoring people publicly. This branch contained several activities such as monitoring individuals in public places via inserting hidden cameras in public monuments and pictures. Moreover, because “His [Saddam’s] picture appeared . . . on every wall, and huge murals of his image covered entire buildings.” (Abdullah 2003:181), it imposed an extra burden to find out which statue carried

a hidden camera. 'Big Brother' was healthy and active in Iraq. Another way to monitor Iraqis was the presence of the military uniform in public places, whether army, police, or intelligence. In fact, Saddam Hussein's government focused on the military as the main tool of censorship because it served as the alleged function of "defending' the homeland, policing citizens, controlling movement, surveillance, catching offenders, and anything else the Ba'ath might fit into the label of 'national security'." (Makiya 1998:32). The Iraqi government made sure that the military and intelligence apparatuses were increased and during the eighties and nineties. Makiya writes, "The Ministry of Interior is by far the largest branch of government." (Makiya 1998:37). The result of the military expansion and presence in the streets is that "No one dares ridicule authority any longer in Iraq because everyone is afraid. The tone of political culture has become . . . saturated with a sense of the impersonality of sinister and impenetrable forces, operating on helpless individuals, who nonetheless, intuit that they are being buffered about a bizarre, almost transcendental kind of rationality." (Makiya 1998:45).

Censorship in Iraq also included monitoring all types of media, both radio and television. Satellite dishes were prohibited in Iraq and were only allowed in 2003 after Saddam's regime was toppled. Some Iraqis were successful in smuggling small satellite dishes into their homes. The usual place to install a satellite is upon the roof; however, it was impossible for Iraqis to install it overtly. So, the solution was to hide the satellite dish inside chicken coops because domesticating chickens is a hobby of some Iraqis. In 2001, one of my colleagues told me that he had purchased a satellite and had to build a chicken coop over it for a secure coverage because the helicopters of the Hussein regime used to scan the areas looking for satellites and similar prohibited devices. Censoring Internet was strongly present

in Iraqi society. Internet cafés did not exist before the war in 2003. Use of the Internet was limited to the personnel in the ministries. Only shortly before the war in 2003 the Internet was allowed in the universities in Iraq; however, there was no freedom as Internet laboratories were filled with experienced personnel to watch the web pages explored by students, and the high prices spent per hour on the service itself.

The Ba'ath government monitored all the local and international newspapers, books, periodicals, novels, and translations. The Ministry of Information was in charge of monitoring the translation sector. In addition, it monitored the Internet by granting limited access to the web. Access was given only to the ministries and companies that were under the government's direct supervision. Another sector that was censored by the Ba'ath government was the mail system, both domestic and international. For people to mail a videocassette or a CD for instance, they had to send the original tape to the Ministry of Information to ratify the contents. For instance, a friend of mine tried to mail a CD of her sister's wedding to a relative in Libya in 2001. She had to get the approval of the Ministry of Information first, and then she received her CD marked with sealing wax along with the approval papers.

The Ba'ath government watched an extremely significant percentage of Iraqi society. This group is represented in different-aged students. The government established a Student Union for all the educational levels in Iraq starting from the Vanguard Organization for elementary students, then the General Union for Iraqi Students for high school students, and finally the General Union for Iraqi Youth for college students. There were different unions for different educational stages; however the mission was one, to recruit as many students as possible, both males and females, to join the Ba'ath Party and influence them to guarantee future supporters. In *The Selling of Fidel Castro: the Media and the Cuban Revolution*

(1987), William Ratliff writes, “Totalitarian censorship tries to change the way the people think so that they all say the same thing.” (Ratliff 1987:83). Similar to Cuba, every year, millions of new uniforms, booklets, allowance, and memberships were distributed all over Iraq to spread the Ba’ath ideology. The government claimed that it was protecting students’ rights of speech and freedom, but the reality was something else. For instance, in each university in Baghdad, there is a wall called *The Free Wall*. The government claimed that this wall was dedicated to receive complains submitted by students if they faced any problem on campus. Supposedly, the idea of *The Free Wall* was to protect the identity of students who posted complaints, but the actual purpose of *The Free Wall* was to report students who dared to reveal any problem on campus or those who complained about the professors at their universities. If a student is caught posting a complaint, jail or death sentence is waiting for him. I had mentioned *The Free Wall* in a conference in Binghamton University in New York in May 2007, and after I finished my speech, one of the audience approached me and said that he agreed with me and knew what it felt to post something on *The Free Wall*. He mentioned that one of his relatives was a student in Iraq, and one day he posted his complaint on *The Free Wall*. The student was arrested, sent to jail, and released later because he was Palestinian.

Iraqi citizens fell under a restricted movement. That is, all the roads were monitored, many check points were set up on the roads between the eighteen governorates, and identification cards were checked all the time to make sure no military deserters or wanted religious activists could escape the country. Add to that the countless restrictions imposed on Iraqi citizens, both men and women, who wished to travel abroad. One of those restrictions was the four hundred thousand Iraqi dinars (about \$133.00) to obtain the passport when the

salaries in general were three thousand dinars (\$1.07) per month. Moreover, it was impossible to complete the travel documents without paying bribes to the people in charge. As for women, they had to pay the same amount of money for their passports, and they had to be accompanied by a male chaperone. That step added another barrier to women.

Before toppling Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iraq was governed by a one-party government. Any other party was prevented from emerging into the political arena. The Ba'ath government eliminated the rule of multi-party elections and executed anyone who spoke against Saddam Hussein. To further expand its authorities, the Ba'ath imposed a regulation for all schools and universities around the country. The regulation was that all schools be *ba'athically* closed, which means that all students must join the Ba'ath Party; otherwise, the student makes himself under scrutiny. I, on the other hand, never joined the Ba'ath Party. When I was in high school in 1995, my file contained no information about my Ba'ath activities. The school principal came to my classroom and questioned me and several other students about why we refused to join the Ba'ath. I gave no answer at that time, and managed to convince the school board that I did not have time for the meetings. For some reason, they were satisfied with that excuse.

One of the aims of making all schools Ba'athist was to collect large sums of money annually. The strange thing was that money was gathered even from students who were not members of the Ba'ath. The government claimed that the money would be used to renovate schools and universities and to purchase more new textbooks; however, none of those promises were kept. For example, in the final year of my elementary school in 1992, I was given an old version of *The Science Book*. I was promised to receive an updated copy, but I was never given one in spite of paying the annual fees for the Ba'ath.

While internal censorship in Iraq deals with Iraqis' lives inside the country, the external one focuses events outside the country. External censorship in Iraq could be elaborated as the image the Ba'ath government gave to the rest of the world. External censorship in Iraq was conducted to accomplish several goals. I think that the main goal was to perpetuate the Ba'ath's image to other countries in a good way. Saddam Hussein wanted to grant the false impression over his image as a caring president. He starved the Iraqis, yet he distributed free humanitarian material to the neighboring Arab countries. Thus, he managed to maintain the symbol of generosity in a time when the Iraqis were dying of starvation, malnutrition, and simply treated diseases. In addition, the money gathered from selling humanitarian goods was used to build Saddam's palaces.

The consequences of internal and external censorship in Iraq are serious. Besides the fact that a huge portion of the generations of the eighties and nineties lacks the education required to improve their lives, economic disasters cannot be ignored. Aside from all types of censorship in Iraq, there is the fear that accompanied people who have lived under the Ba'ath regime in Iraq for decades. Makiya writes, "Fear was not...incidental or episodic, as in more "normal" states; it had become constitutive of the Iraqi body politics. The Ba'ath developed the politics of fear into an art form, one that ultimately served the purpose of legitimizing their rule by making large numbers of people complicit in the violence of the regime." (Makiya 1998:xi).

Many forces were involved in imposing censorship in Iraq such as the States Internal Security, the Military Intelligence, and the army (Makiya 1998: 12, 13, 21). Torture was a key element in controlling Iraqis. Kanan Makiya suggests that "Systematic institutional torture is not only a mechanism for the unearthing of 'facts' relating to perceived

deviancy . . . or for obtaining information rapidly, although this is one justification . . . The investigatory institutions whose organizing principle is torture . . . usually emerge *after* all political opposition has been eliminated, and hence all immediate threats that might require ‘rapid’ thwarting through torture . . . the range of cruel institutional practices in contemporary Iraq--confession rituals, public hangings, corpse displays, executions, and finally torture--are designed to breed and sustain widespread fear.” (Makiya 1998:66, 67).

Translators, as Iraqi citizens, were subjected to the same, if not even stricter, system of censorship, torture, and monitoring because “Educators are equally subject to police scrutiny.” (Makiya 1998:80). For the Ba’ath government to appoint translators in their service, they had to join the Ba’ath Party and prove their loyalty. The Ministry of Culture and Information was in charge of hiring translators. Background checks used to be conducted on a regular basis by the Iraqi intelligence. Moreover, the translations used to be scrutinized and each page of a given foreign book would be stamped with a special seal to avoid any future changes on the translated pages. The movement of publication and translation was narrow in Iraq because of the restrictions imposed on translation. The publishing houses before the war included Children’s Culture House (1969), Cultural Affair House (1975), and Dar al-Ma'mun for Translation and Publishing (mid 1980). After the war in 2003, only one house was opened which is the Kurdish House for Culture and Publication in 2005, according to the Iraqi Ministry of Culture.

It was impossible in Iraq, for more than thirty-five years of dictatorship, to feel freedom in any way. The question here is how a country, whose government interferes with citizens’ privacies and lives, can have the features of a multi-opinion society. The answer is that it is impossible to accomplish that because freedom is the basis for any developed and

civilized society. For example, people called for secularism in Europe during the seventeenth century because the authority of the church was the ultimate power and it persecuted thinkers and scientists such as Galileo. As a result, individuals rejected that authority and replaced it with a different system to develop their societies. For Iraqi society to stand up again, the opportunity must be given to Iraqis to express their opinions and help develop their country. Also, organization must replace the current chaos because there is no way to rebuild a country where individuals are working against each other in a disorganized milieu.

Translation, as many other fields in Iraq, has been dramatically affected by the oppressive measures of the former regime. In an interview done by a journalist called Fadeela Yezel and published in *Al-Mada Newspaper* in Iraq, the director of public relations at Dar al-Ma'mun for Translation and Publishing, Abdul Rahman Musa, pointed out, "Statistics referred that the number of translated books . . . since 1980 until 2003, was 130 which were translated by Dar al-Ma'mun for Translation and Publishing specifically and seven translated books in association with The Public Cultural Affair House. Those books included different forms of literature such as novel, story, poetry, and play, in addition to military, archeological, and historic encyclopedias." (Yezel 2003). Among the books translated and published in Iraq are *The Fox* translated by Namir Abbas Muzaffar and published in 1987, and *How Plays Are Made* translated by Abdallah Mu'tasim Ad-Dabbagh and published in 1987. Also, *Wide Sargasso Sea* was translated by Falah Rahim and published in 1988, according to the database of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The latter book was allowed in Iraq because it depicts the image of the British man as greedy and disrespectful, which gives Iraqi readers a negative impression about Britain, a matter sought by the Saddam government. As for the books

written by Iraqi authors and which translated to English, I found 103 books of which the overwhelming majority is political ones. The list includes 54 books written by Saddam Hussein, and the rest of titles deal with political matters (ibid).

Iraqi translators who have worked for the government faced another measure; the measure of stamping each translated page of any foreign book to avoid possible future changes as stamping papers was a widely used process in Iraq to avoid falsification. Also, the government had had other monitors to scrutinize the translations of the original ones to eliminate any possibility of publishing a translation that did not comply with the desire of the Ba'ath government.

The situation in Iraq under Saddam Hussein is similar to that in Russia under Joseph Stalin. In *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, Deborah Martinsen writes, "Censorship agencies proliferated, supervising and often contradicting one another. . . . Although the censorship examined works prior to publication . . . if the published work incurred the displeasure of someone in high places, writers and publishers could be punished subsequent to publication, even when the laws ostensibly protected them." (Martinsen 1997:44).

The oppressive measures of Ba'ath government intended to restrain the freedom of translation and monitor any translated books because the government wanted to emphasize books that dealt with the Ba'ath ideologies and beliefs, in an attempt to restrict the educated Iraqi populace, an effort that was very successful. Among the censored Arabic books, for example, is the book titled *The Tyranny: a Philosophical Study of Images of Political Despotism* (1994) by Imam Abdul Fattah Imam. This book was censored because Imam described the political dictatorship in different Arab countries such as Egypt and Iraq. Imam argues, "Any tyranny exerts efforts to obtain organized information of what his citizens do or

say.” (Imam 1994:121). In another argument, Imam states that “In the East, the ruler does not feel embarrassed to exploit the press, media, television, and all sources of broadcast to talk about glory, heroism, and victory even if he is severely defeated--in a battle he calls *The Mother of Battles*.” (Imam 1994:266). Saddam Hussein was the intended ruler in Imam’s latter argument because Saddam was the one who called the Gulf War *Mother of all Battles* in 1991. Imam’s argument convincingly portrays the methods Saddam used to control the country, including the proscription of many Arabic-language religious books that dealt with Shiite faith such as *Keys of Heavens* (1991) and *Light of the Good* (2003). Generally, censorship in Iraq has been attributed to different causes when it is related to books. Some books were censored because of political content such as *East of the Mediterranean* by Abdul Rahman Munif, and *The Tyranny: a Philosophical Study of Images of Political Despotism* by Imam Abdul Fattah Imam; others were banned for religious contents such as *Keys of Heavens* (1991) by Abbas Qumi. Regardless of the reasons given to censor a book in Iraq, the aim was one, which is to prevent Iraqis from being aware of the methodologies to challenge the previous regime because “Authoritarian rulers aim only to stay in power.” (Walzer 1983: 105).

In addition to religious books, literary books were also prohibited in Iraq among which were *Animal Farm* (1944) and *1984* (1948) by George Orwell. Although these books were published about fifty years ago, I chose them because they represent the closest look at the reality in my country, Iraq. It is well known that the best way to make a book famous is to censor it, and that is partially why I have chosen these books. Both books reflect the Iraqi reality in different ways. However, both of them are strongly connected to the status of literature in Iraq under the regime of Saddam Hussein.

The novel *Animal Farm* was censored in Iraq for about four decades except for a few copies. It was allowed for the first time after the Soviet Union collapsed. I think that the novel was allowed because the well-established reputation of the book forced the Iraqi government to allow it in Iraq but in limited number of copies because “Allowing a book to be published within certain restrictions and conditions makes it visible and invisible at the same time.” (Munif 2004:9).

It is well known that Saddam Hussein was closely connected to the despotic regime of Joseph Stalin. In *Libricide: The Regime-Sponsored Destruction of Books and Libraries in the Twentieth Century* (2003), Rebecca Knuth argues that, “The Godfather was his [Saddam’s] favorite movie and Stalin his personal hero.” (Knuth 2003:148). As a result, it was impossible for the toppled Iraqi government to allow a book that vilified its hero to be published. In addition, any book that criticized the government would be absolutely rejected in a Stalinesque mode. In *What Stalin Knew: the Enigma of Barbarossa* (2005), David Murphy tells us:

Stalin saw criticism of any aspect of his agricultural and industrial policies as an attack of his leadership of the party, and he responded by instituting widespread purges of those he termed ‘the opposition.’ The arrest, imprisonment, or execution of many thousands of the nation’s most talented people would in time felt through out the party, government, and economy, but most severely in the armed forces. Apart from the problems caused by the loss of experienced cadres, the purges resulted in an atmosphere of fear and suspicion that paralyzed many of the survivors, making them incapable or unwilling to work effectively or creatively. (Murphy 2005:2)

Indeed, *Animal Farm* has contributed to the intellectual awareness of populations who live under dictatorships. In fact, Orwell did not predict a new phenomenon in the world. The writer only attempted to argue that any dictator would not last as long as his rule was based

on wrong methodologies; eventually, the dictator would lose all the means of power he preserved for himself. The characters in Orwell's book can be bad. They may or may not represent the author's view. Within the theme of *Animal Farm*, Orwell's "Motive [was] . . . to destroy Westerners' illusions about the Soviet Union (in the 1940s under the control of Joseph Stalin in his dual capacity as premier and general secretary of the Communist party) by exposing the falsity of claims that the Soviet Union was a socialist and therefore progressive society." (Smyer 1988:11). Saddam Hussein learned from the oppressive methods of Joseph Stalin and adopted many of them. For instance, the main aspect Orwell focuses on is the aspect of using torture to oppress any sign of disobedience. This is the pivotal method used by Stalin to repress his rivals, and so did Hussein. In *The UN Committee against Torture: an Assessment* (2001), Chris Ingelse argues, "Totalitarian regimes such as . . . the Stalin regime in particular used torture as a technique to subdue the people and to maintain a firm grasp on power." (Ingelse 2001:30).

In *Animal Farm*, the similarities between the novel's main characters and the former Iraqi government officials are undeniable. These similarities include the symbolism embodied in the novel as well as the linguistic features. The symbolic characteristics have left obvious traces throughout the entire novel. I think that Orwell's choice of animals to tell a human story was a clever option. The main character in the novel, Napoleon, is represented by a pig. The horses, chickens, sheep, and cattle represent the population, and the dogs represent the supporters Napoleon. The symbolic significance of each character is a unique picture drawn by Orwell. Smyer elaborates the personification of each animal in the novel when he explains that "farmer Jones is Czar Nicholas II . . . Old Major [pig] is Marx . . . Boxer and Clover [horses] represent the proletariat . . . Napoleon stands for Joseph Stalin . . .

the pigs in general represent the party . . .” (Smyer 1988:13). I think that Orwell chose the name Napoleon for two reasons. First, Napoleon is the name of the French “emperor” who was defeated and exiled during his life in 1815. Second, Napoleon died in 1821, so no person could sue Orwell for disrespecting a live leader, assuming that Orwell’s intention was to denigrate a leader in the first place. Thus, Orwell was able to avoid the criticism that might have been generated by choosing a leader still alive. The significance of choosing Napoleon as a name of the main character in the novel refers to the pig’s intention to single-handedly control the rest of the animals in the farm, a matter which is similar to what Saddam Hussein did in Iraq.

Another symbolic feature in *Animal Farm* is centered on how the pigs governed the farm. According to Orwell, the pigs are not smart animals, yet they governed the rest of the animals. Also, we did not notice any elections by which pigs became the lords of the farm, and this is the nature of totalitarian rulers, i.e. they seize power without any legitimacy. Under dictatorships, usually individuals do not question the significance of laws decided by the dictator; as a result, people are suppressed until they believe the lies perpetuated by the government, such as that the dictator is always right, and there is no need to discuss him. In his book *The Tyranny: a Philosophical Study of Images of Political Despotism* (1994), Imam supports that argument as he writes, “The order issued by the ruler is unquestionable and unarguable, and it must be executed, regardless how trivial and meaningless it is.” (Imam 1994:174). Moreover, dictators tend to establish their own laws without any interference from the people, and yet they [dictators] claim that these laws direct the people and serve their interests. For example, *The Seven Commandments* in the novel are correspondent to the fifty-seven commandments stated by Saddam Hussein on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000 in one of his

speeches; yet, we, Iraqis did not understand the overwhelming majority of those commandments due to the absolute vagueness of their meanings and their separation from the important issues in the society. For instance, one of those commandments was:

If you do not intend to go all the way, you will have to enlighten your enemy on the consequences when it is your intention to avoid a conflict with him. Perhaps he has not decided to take the conflict all the way, and his action which suggested to you that he intended a full-scale conflict was nothing but stupidity on his part which veiled the possibility of his seeing the consequences. Your enlightening may stop him from going all the way. But if you decide to combat the enemy, expose his reality as an aggressor and let the big blow come from you and the decisive blow be yours. (Ruysdael 2003: 133).

The above commandment does not specify the nature of the mentioned conflict, the nature of the enemy, the consequences, besides the reality that the commandment is not related to the life of the Iraqis who were suffering greatly because of that dictator. Besides, Iraqi students had to memorize the fifty-seven commandments, as they became part of the academic course study around the country.

In *Animal Farm*, Orwell sheds light on the pigs' capability to convince the rest of the animals with anything the pigs wished to accomplish in a way that does not contradict the laws listed earlier. Thus, they can twist the laws in the direction they wish. For example, Orwell depicts the pigs' ability to deceive the birds when writing one of the commandments. Orwell writes:

Snowball declared that . . . "Four legs good, two legs bad." . . . The birds at first objected, since it seemed to them that they also had two legs, but Snowball proved to them that this was not so. "A bird's wing, comrades," he said, "is an organ of propulsion and not of manipulation. It should therefore be regarded as a leg. The distinguishing mark of man is the *hand*, the instrument with which he does all his mischief. (Orwell 1946:38)

In another instance, Orwell supports the bloody nature of the totalitarian regimes by the changes pigs made on *The Seven Commandments* when he writes, “No animal shall kill any other animal *without cause*.” (Orwell 1946:100) or “No animal shall drink alcohol *to excess*.” (Orwell 1946:120), in addition to other examples scattered throughout the novel. This is similar to the feature of the Ba’ath Party when it exiled Iraqi Shiite citizens outside Iraq during the 1970s. The former Iraqi government claimed that the exiled citizens were “Deemed to be of ‘Iranian origin’. . .” (Makiya 1998:19). No Iraqi person dared to question that claim, nor stop it. Eventually, Iraqis were convinced that the government’s decision was the right one. Another instance of the dictators’ unquestioned mistakes was the fact that animals did realize that the pigs were making mistakes, yet no animal bravely spoke. Orwell clarifies that by arguing that “It was very neatly written, and except that ‘friend’ was written ‘friend’ and one of the ‘S’s’ was the wrong way round, the spelling was correct.” (Orwell 1946:28).

The general atmosphere of *Animal Farm* changes gradually. I mean Orwell was really successful in picturing how the social regime was formed by a democratic dictatorship in the beginning. Then, it slowly revealed its true colors through the events of the novel. At the end, Orwell elaborated his point of view by arguing that despotic regimes do not last for a long time. At the end of *Animal Farm*, Orwell was very successful when he pointed out that both the pigs and human beings were in fact sharing the same bloody nature. Orwell attempted to convey to us his point of view by predicting the collapse of the Soviet Union almost forty-five years earlier. That is the main reason *Animal Farm* was censored for so many years in Iraq and the Soviet Union.

While *Animal Farm* deals with animals, *1984* deals with human beings. Orwell's second censored book in Iraq is titled *1984*, which was published in 1948. Unlike *Animal Farm*, *1984* was not allowed to reach the Iraqi reader. Orwell, in this novel, openly criticizes the authoritarian governments by exposing their lies and shedding light over a particular feature associated with them, which is the complex of victory. In *1984*, the Party, which has no clear name, gives the title "victory" to a majority of matters. There are Victory Cigarettes, Victory Building, Victory Wine, Victory Statue, etc. What's vague throughout the novel is the real foes upon whom the victory is visited. The Party and Big Brother have launched war after war without reaching the long-pursued aim which is victory. In Iraq, the Ba'ath Party also suffered from the complex of victory. There were Victory Square, Victory Trucks, Victory Arch, Victory Movie Theatre, Victory Military Product Exchange Center, Victory Street, and the Great Victory Day on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1988, when the Iraqi-Iranian war stopped after eight bloody years, as a stalemate.

Orwell's pivotal ideologies in *1984* are based on the fact that governments which live on the skulls and blood of their people do not last and are unable to take away the people's will. Orwell writes, "It is impossible to found a civilization on fear and hatred and cruelty. It would never endure. . . It would have no vitality. It would disintegrate. It would commit suicide." (Orwell 2003:278). He also conveys that people are the only solution to challenge the governments' corruption by possessing the consciousness to do so. He continues, "Until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious." (Orwell 2003:73). The totalitarian party in *1984* cons its citizens by convincing them that they are unable to successfully govern themselves because no person is

qualified enough to lead the people, and that Big Brother and his party are the only entity competent to do so.

The characteristic that distinguishes *1984* and possibly led to censoring the novel in Iraq is that almost every object has a correspondent in Iraqi society under the Ba'ath regime. For example, the telescreen is an equivalent to the spies spread in each corner in Iraq even among the same family. Big Brother and his party equal Saddam and his Ba'ath Party. Also, the cemetery of papers represents the lack or absence of thousands and thousands of records hidden by the previous regime in Iraq regarding executed Iraqis. I witnessed an incident in Baghdad in December of 2002 when many Iraqis gathered near one of the prisons after Saddam's broad amnesty. They were family members and relatives waiting for the release of hundreds of prisoners and detainees. Some officers of the collapsed regime gathered money from the families in exchange for information about their imprisoned sons, yet no answers were given. The Ba'ath Party hid most of the physical evidence to protect itself, as Orwell explains that "Every record has been destroyed or falsified . . . every date has been altered. And that process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right." (Orwell 2003:158).

In the novel *1984*, we find the simplest matters become crimes that deserve punishment. Love and marriage are crimes because they raise the human being to a paramount status. Purchasing simple things is also a crime because the Party does not allow them. In Iraq, we find similar things occurred but in a different way. For example, before the war in 2003, buying cell phones and satellites were crimes punishable by the death penalty. The person who wanted to own a cell phone had to obtain a written authorization from the

Ministry of Interior. One of my colleagues had to follow the procedures and obtain the authorization for his cell phone from the Ministry of Interior. Another friend did not obtain the required authorization and bought smuggled cell phones directly before the war. Because he did not obtain the required authorization, he was executed along with his father and brother, and the Ba'ath Party refused to return the corpses to the family. They were found later in a mass grave shortly after the war in 2003. Unfortunately, the people who seek freedom in a dark and closed society are the ones to be targeted in Iraq because they represent an unquestionable threat to the core of the dictatorship in that society as they attempt to break the rules.

Denying readers within a certain culture the right to know about their own culture is a very serious matter as it diverts the reader from solving problems in his society to marginalized issues. One of the early attempts in Iraq to break traditional roles was done by an Iraqi writer in the forties. The book I address in this chapter deals with specific issues that are not allowed to be discussed in Iraqi community as it represents a breach of the invisible wall of traditions and a taboo subject because it is not supposed to exist in the first place. Without realizing what is "shameful" to discuss, people find it easier to ignore a particular issue.

I believe that a given culture needs to be pictured with all its complexities, ideologies, and positive and/or negative visages. Denying, or to be more specific censoring, certain negative images of the society is a mere attempt to bury solutions and answers that might help solve the problems and modify that negative images. Interpreting those images in this case becomes self cultural-oriented. Thus, I will address a censored novel in Iraqi society as an example of the cultural censorship in Iraq.

The Iraqi writer, Fo'ad Al-Takarli, decided to address two of the many forbidden issues in Iraqi society because "It began to be noticed that literary texts were constituted not primary of language but in fact of culture, language being in effect a vehicle of the culture." (Trivedi 2005:2). Al-Takarli's work is a re-presentation of the problems found within Iraq. He selected certain taboo issues and recreated them in a narrative framework. When it comes to Fo'ad Al-Takarli's stories, culture played a role in shaping the way Iraqis think being the decisive factor in accepting or rejecting a novel.

During 1948-1949, Al-Takarli wrote a book titled *Spit at Life in the Face/The Other Face*. It consists of two short stories which represent the title of the novel. The first matter he tackles is represented in the first story, *Spit at Life in the Face*, in which the author writes about incest. In the novel, the protagonist is a father of three young daughters, all in their twenties. The father suffers from a sexual deviation as he is not satisfied with his wife. As a result, he starts to pay attention to one of his daughters, Fatima. To describe the father's thoughts, Al-Takarli writes, "I started to listen to her [his daughter] words, to the sounds of her movements, and count her steps. Like a wolf, I started to think about myself and the desires moving in it . . . my desire was to see her; and I did see her lifting her soft black hair. Her body is graceful and looks very beautiful in the short blue dress. Her face, though slightly pale with fine and beautiful features, looks gorgeous!! I swear by God, gorgeous." (Al-Takarli 2001:42). The father's desire to have intercourse with his daughter increases. Thus, he starts to notice his second daughter, Sabeeha, as he describes his feelings, "After she [Sabeeha] sat with me for a while, I felt that I have to do something to push her away from me, push away this destructive creature. But, what should I do? . . . So, I stood still and speechless, staring at her wide black eyes, and quickly breathing her perfume which mixed

with erotic perspiration. Each movement in my body froze except for that of wild desire.” (Al-Takarli 2001:55). As the events escalate in the novel, the father tries to get rid of his feelings for his daughter, Fatima. He seeks sexual intercourse with a prostitute, but fails in consummation and leaves. At the end, the father has no solution but to suffocate his daughter, Fatima, as his desire for her body becomes intolerable. The father says “It’s done. I did it alone . . . Few minutes ago, I killed her [Fatima]. I suffocated her with these hands . . . I had no other choice. She refused [to sleep with her father] until her last breath in the life” (Al-Takarli 2001:93). The theme of *Spit at Life in the Face* is culturally interesting and touches some families within the community, yet it is socially rejected because of the conservatism of Iraqi society. That is why themes of such kind are doomed to vanish before they exist.

The second story is titled *The Other Face*. This short story, on the other hand, carries another theme, but does exist in all societies. The story deals with the sexual desire of a newly married man, Ja’afar Mohammad, and the financial difficulties he faces. It also addresses women’s rights in Iraqi society. The man is happy in the beginning when he learns that his wife is pregnant. He thinks about how to manage the money required for the delivery. He decides to borrow twenty dinars from a lender. This sum of money was very huge during the 1940s. After the delivery, the husband finds out that his son is born dead and the wife has turned blind. It is then when the protagonist starts to struggle with his sexual feelings as he wishes to have intercourse with his wife, but thinks about her ‘infirmity’ despite her being sexually active. As a result, Ja’afar starts to focus on Saleema, the young woman in the complex where he lives, in an attempt to seduce her. Saleema, as expected from an honest woman, refuses his seduction.

The internal struggle of the main character, Ja'afar, is explicit through his self challenge for the traditions of the society. Al-Takarli writes, "Is it necessary to be an honest person? What does this mean? Honesty does not stop humans' agonies, not even a single human being's pain. But you can refuse this pain with a peaceful mind while you lay in a comfortable and warm bed holding a young woman. Then, you will be an honest person against moralists' will. What a ridiculous matter!!" (Al-Takarli 2001:150).

In addition, Al-Takarli addresses another sensitive issue in Iraqi society which is the way women are viewed and how they are treated. For instance, Ja'afar, the husband, divorces his wife after she becomes blind but in an inhumane way as Al-Takarli tells us, "He was conspiring against his wife when he divorced and accompanied her to her parents' home in order [for her] to receive the divorce papers over there. He was afraid of her because she would expose him had she known." (Al-Takarli 2001:194). What Al-Takarli attempted to say is that Iraqi society discriminates against women. Had the blinded partner been the husband, then the wife would have to stay married to him.

In both stories, Al-Takarli challenged the society. In addition to addressing incest and discrimination, he crossed a very delicate line, which is religion. On several occasions, he placed certain adjectives against God. For example, Al-Takarli writes, "Sabeeha . . . is the only one among them who thinks and talks about God as a small servant at her palace without embarrassment or asking for His forgiveness." (Al-Takarli 2001:44). In another instance, he says, "I remembered the sky again, looked at it, and sarcastically laughed . . . one emptiness dominates another!! . . . You, illusive God, I am close to you in holiness and illusion." (Al-Takarli 2001:63). Any transcendence regarding religion is absolutely rejected, and that is part of the reason *Spit at Life in the Face/The Other Face* is prohibited in Iraq.

As the above section illustrates, both original writings, Al-Takarli's and Orwell's, were submitted to the same strict standards of censorship in Iraq. Al-Takarli's work was tabooed under the pretext of cultural conservativeness; Orwell was prohibited for political reasons. In *Censorship: or Freedom of Expression* (2001), Nancy Day argues, "Censorship occurs when the government, special interest groups, or private individuals impose their moral or political values on others, by suppressing words, images, or ideas that they find objectionable. Censorship is the restriction of what people may say, hear, write, read, or see." (Day 2001:10). As a result, the successive Iraqi governments presented any reasons they want to prevent questionable publications.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**CENSORSHIP AND SELF-CENSORSHIP**  
**IN IRAQ (2003-2005)**

It might be difficult for many individuals, especially those who have never lived in Iraq, to understand how this country was governed in the last four decades. When they ask an Iraqi person, “How did you live?” the answer simply would be “I was isolated from the outside world.” The reason for the hardship of isolation is that the Iraqi people have lived under military dictatorship for almost thirty-five years and in a complete blackout for almost twenty-five years. This has led to the censoring of thousands of pieces of documentary evidence regarding the events that took place in Iraq.

In the beginning of this chapter, I draw a general picture of Iraqi society and the place of women there. I also provide a framework for the personal experience of a female Iraqi translator as documentation of self-censorship after the occupation in 2003. I will give this female translator an alias to protect her identity. Her name in this research is Dina.

I intend in this chapter to give a general idea to other translators of how Iraqi translators survive nowadays after the invasion in April, 2003. Moreover, I suggest some of my personal opinions regarding translation methodologies so that more people might benefit from a living example besides what they read in books or watch on television. This chapter focuses on the aspect of self-censorship adopted by Iraqi translators in a war zone. In addition, I present some results of a survey I have conducted regarding self-censorship in the United States of America. The reason I have conducted this survey is that I hope to shed light on the amount of information Americans possess regarding Iraq. The idea of the survey came to my mind after documenting Dina’s experience, especially when she mentioned teaching

American soldiers the cultural awareness about Iraq. Dina is a female Iraqi translator who worked for the United States Army. It was very important for me to give her this false name, upon her request, as her life might be jeopardized. Dina thinks that it is highly necessary to educate the world about the dangers faced by the American soldiers and Iraqi citizens alike.

My study represents a new perspective regarding translators who work in a war zone, which in this case, Iraq. It is not an easy task to translate or interpret in an atmosphere of a high level of tension where the translator expects to lose his life any minute. In this chapter, this unique point of view is addressed.

At the end of this chapter, I attempt to answer some of the questions I have encountered within the course of my research, including the role of the translator in Iraqi society. What are the types of censorship translators conduct in Iraqi society after the war in 2003? How do the Iraqi people see translators today? I also aim to raise some questions for future research such as: what is the difference between a translator in a war zone and another one in a peaceful place? How do they differ? Are there certain standards followed by translators in general to maintain honest and accurate translations? In a war zone, what does really matter, the translator's life or the honesty of the message? I also reveal the outcome of my survey and how it relates to the current issues the world faces. All these questions and many more represent the core of this chapter.

Although Iraq is a Muslim country, it is secular and tolerant of other religions. However, there are certain behaviors that are rejected by Iraqis, including homosexuality, alcohol consumption, and extra marital relationships. The degree of rejecting each point is different. For example, people might tolerate a person who drinks alcohol but they will not tolerate a homosexual person. Iraqi society is a hybrid one. It includes different sects,

cultures, religions, and ethnicities; however, Iraqi society is tribal to a large degree. That is, the ultimate respect is for the tribe before the government. In such society, the dominance in the family belongs to the males. This does not mean that women have no role; rather, they play a very vital role in the family. However, the male has the final word in this type of a society. Iraqi women respect men so much that men represent the center of the family and this is how Iraqi women gain their strength. Iraqi women have not been favored in some professions, especially armed forces; however, the woman's role is irreplaceable in Iraq, and many laws were changed to permit women to enter certain professions. For instance, in 1977, women were allowed to join the military and "enrolled women were considered completely subject to all military regulations . . . a woman may be appointed as an officer if she carries a university degree in a health-related field." (Makiya 1998:90).

It is hard to explain all aspects of Iraqi society because it is a very unique country, and every thread in its structure is of a different color. Providing an image that is as complete as possible is important to the outside world. As for women's role in Iraqi society, I would say that women have sacrificed much to participate in developing Iraqi society, and most fields are open for them. For a person who is not from Iraq, the general stereotype would be that women have no role at all, and if they do, then it must be a very restricted one. But the reality is that the role of Iraqi women is very effective.

The role of Iraqi women has dramatically changed twice. First, after the Gulf War in 1991, and second after the war in 2003. The major alteration of the Gulf War in 1991 occurred because large numbers of women started to work outside the house in order to help support their families after the economy in Iraq was highly damaged. Women's focus was on the profession of teaching. Although the salaries were insufficient, women maintained their

careers. Part of the reason was the independence experienced by women in general. The other change was after the war in 2003, when Iraqi women started to join the military and police force in addition to the profession of translation with Iraqi and American personnel. The profession of translation is probably the most controversial one due to the direct contact between the translator and *a foreign* person. In Iraq, it is hard for women to change the way the society perceives them. However, many efforts have been exerted to change that view and prove to Iraqi citizens that developing the society and improving the country are the main concerns of female Iraqi translators. Dina is among those female translators that have faced this challenge. Dina finished her education in English and graduated after the war in 2003. Her education at one of the universities was extremely beneficial because the educational system in Iraq amasses a lot of resources. Dina studied different types of translation such as literary, scientific, legal, journalistic, and consecutive. In Iraq, education in general depends on memorization to a great extent, especially in the field of translation. That is, students have to memorize as many words and terminologies as possible. Besides that, they are taught several different techniques in translation to avoid grammatical mistakes and be able to manage any situation during the process of translation. After Dina's graduation, she applied to work as a translator at the Green Zone. Since working for the U.S. Army was the only way for her to earn money, she continued her efforts to find a job within this new core in Iraqi society. In addition, being assigned with the United States Army is an equal opportunity career. Dina was refused employment several times because, she was told only male translators would be needed to work in convoys with the United States Army. After three months of delay, she was told that there was no space for her because she was a woman, while the company that hired translators needed men to roam with the soldiers and

spend the night at the military bases. So, Dina went to a neighboring company at the Green Zone. Fortunately, she was told that her translation services were needed at one of the military bases in Baghdad. She was thrilled to hear that news because, while thousands of college degree students were looking for jobs, that was such an achievement for a woman under those difficult circumstances at that time. Dina was assigned to the base in 2003. For this young Iraqi woman, the professional life was totally different from that of college because in college, theorization mattered more than pragmatism. In other words, students concentrate on the grammatical and compositional rules they studied. However, in the fieldwork, all the rules require less importance. Dina has faced several situations where she would correct a word in her speech or change a term if she thought it was not the perfect one, and she would find the American soldier telling her not to pay attention to the grammar or syntax and focus more on conveying the message itself. That being said, it does not mean to ignore the grammatical and syntactical rules, but it means that the core of the message is of higher importance.

What makes the profession of translation in Iraq harder than other careers after the war in 2003 is that translators must be unbiased, and maintain their lives at the same time. This is a hard equation because the translator cannot be loyal to the profession and protect his/her life simultaneously. Also, the Iraqi translator is considered responsible for teaching cultural awareness to the American soldiers. That is, if an American soldier makes a mistake, then the translator is the person to be blamed by the Iraqis for not educating the soldier. For instance, a young American soldier dropped some rice on the ground and did not pick it up. To leave rice on the floor is a sin in Iraqi society; so, Dina had to show him the importance of lifting the rice from the floor and the cultural significance behind that. To avoid future

mistakes, Dina started to teach the soldiers how to deal with the Iraqis, especially women, and how to analyze the cultural differences. She also gave them a general view of how Iraqi customs and traditions work. All these activities had to be conducted in a secretive fashion because in Dina's society, she would be considered a person who favors Americans and this is not acceptable because they are *foreigners*. Iraqi society is extremely conservative and the farther Iraqis live from cities, the more conservative they become. Iraqis in general are reluctant to the fact that Iraqi women are working for the American Army. It is the fear that controlled the Iraqis for decades that a Western person is immoral. Thus, American men or *the foreigners* are profiled as unfaithful and opportunists. In the beginning, Dina's job was very difficult for several reasons. The first reason is that she is an Iraqi woman working among soldiers of the United States Army. This means that she had to come in direct contact with the so-called *foreigners* on a daily basis, a matter which is culturally disfavored in the country. The second reason is that she was placed at an American base used to train Iraqi policemen, a place filled with Iraqi police officers and American soldiers, a matter which was uncommon at that time because the Iraqi Police Force has never had women within its core, except for administrative positions, until after the war in 2003. Moreover, Dina was harassed by some Iraqi men who did not believe in her or in her capabilities as a female among them. However, this pushed Dina to keep working hard until she was able to prove herself for them and to change the dark image regarding women in general. The image of the female Iraqi translator became clearer to Dina. That is, in August, 2004 she had an Iraqi soldier come to the office. When he entered the office and saw her, he changed his mind regarding the issue he wanted to discuss and told her American employer that he would talk only in the presence

of a male translator. Dina's employer told the Iraqi officer that it was either she would translate or he should leave. The man resentfully accepted Dina's presence.

After being accepted as a translator at the military base, Dina served as a regular translator for about two months where she used to stand side by side with American soldiers to teach the Iraqi cadets the basics of democratic societies. Then in December 2003, she was promoted to become the Senior Interpreter. Dina kept the latter position until she traveled abroad in 2005.

During her translation career with the United States Army, Dina had to adopt a methodology of self-censorship. She censored herself, first as a woman in a society that rejects any suspicious behavior from women in general and second as a translator in one of the most hazardous professions in the world. To be an Iraqi translator in Iraq meant that one's loyalty would be for Iraqi society first, not for the profession because the country is undergoing war. According to her personal experience, the types of censorship Dina conducted were verbal and physical. By verbal censorship I mean that there were certain words, sentences or expressions uttered by American soldiers to Iraqi cadets and vice versa that she could not or would not translate. The verbal censorship she conducted may be attributed to a variety of reasons such as the cultural differences between the American and Iraqi societies, her being a female translator, and the fact that both Iraqi and American sides did not possess the knowledge to discover the verbal censorship in the first place. However, the most important reason Dina resorted to the verbal censorship was that it was necessary to maintain her safety. She learned that one thing is very important in a war zone: to stay alive. In his article entitled "Censorship and Literature", André Brink argues, "Censorship represents the protective mechanisms and processes of the social organism." (Brink 1983:40).

Censorship, according to Brink, represents a positive factor here because the translator is trying to maintain his or her life first and the profession comes next in a war zone. If these are the priorities, is if self-censorship is the only way for the translator to protect him or herself, then how can s/he evaluate the quality of the translation and judge if it is of a good or poor quality? The answer is that every situation has its own complexities, and the translator is the sole party to decide the accuracy of translation depending on the person, to be more specific the Iraqi persons he is translating for. The reason translators in Iraq change the quality of translation is attributed to the obscure identity of the other Iraqi individual. That is, we do not know if the person in front of us is an insurgent, a terrorist, or a radical; so, we must look very faithful to Iraqis in general, even if they are wrong.

It was hard for Dina to conduct the verbal censorship because the stress experienced in a war zone is more difficult to endure than that of a place of peace. An example of verbal censorship was what happened in September 2003. One of the American soldiers was conducting a special drill to explain the concept of prejudice. He separated the Iraqi cadets into groups according to their age, skin color, experience, and marital status into single and married. The soldier started to ask each group some questions and when he reached the group of single men, he pointed at Dina, the only woman in the class, and told them that she was single, too. She did not translate this sentence because it is socially unacceptable to discuss the woman's marital status in Iraq. Another instance is what happened on March 2005. Dina was translating a conversation between one of the American officials at the base and one of the Iraqi cadets to solve an unpleasant situation. The official was so mad that he started to say some unacceptable words, and he told the cadet that if he did that again, the official would kick the cadet's 'butt' outside the base. Dina's translation was: "Sorry dear brother, but if

you do that again, he has to dismiss you.” Another incident that she will never forget occurred in August 2003 when one of the American soldiers was introducing himself to the Iraqi police officers. Among the matters he mentioned was that he had been married for four years but had no children. The Iraqi policemen started to laugh at him, and they said that he should check himself in to a hospital, meaning that because the soldier had no children then there must be something wrong with him as a man. Dina’s translation for the sarcastic comments by the Iraqis was: “They say welcome.” She had to apologize to the soldier couple days later for not being able to translate the comments.

Dina remembers many examples of verbal censorship during her career. One day, a sick Iraqi cadet came to the office to ask for leave. He brought his medical report, and said that he had hemorrhoids. Within Iraqi society, it is embarrassing to utter the word *hemorrhoids* in public, but the cadet insisted that Dina translate this word specifically because it was the reason he needed to leave in the first place. She did not know how to translate the sickness. Moreover, she could not rephrase the sickness because it is even more unacceptable to do that. The translation was: “This cadet has a very embarrassing disease and I cannot rephrase it. I am sorry.” The American person told Dina at once that he had read the medical report and there would be no need for her to embarrass herself. In another incident that took place in October, 2003 when she was escorting her American employer to interpret for a meeting in another building within the base. Some policemen saw them and they started to say some really offensive comments directed to Dina. The soldier asked her to translate what they said, but she did not; she censored all the comments. The soldier returned to them and explained that this young lady was his translator and she was a very respectable woman.

Dina was positive that neither the soldier nor the policemen were able to communicate with each other, but the policemen got the message since the soldier was extremely angry.

Not all of the translator's self-censorship involved complete erasure. At very memorable event happened during a meeting between some Iraqi and American officials. During the meeting, Dina used the word *brother* to refer to the different participants. After half the meeting was concluded, an Iraqi general stopped her and said that the translation was perfect except for one thing. He said that she was not supposed to use the word *brother* to address the American officials; instead, she should use the word *Mister*. When Dina asked the general for the reason, he answered because they are Americans. She admits that she was not satisfied with this answer because Iraqis would use the word *brother* with any man regardless of his citizenship. At the same time, she could not ignore the general's orders, so she used the word *Mister* after the meeting was resumed.

On several occasions, it was hard for this brave Iraqi woman to balance between the situation she was involved in and the message she was supposed to deliver. Dina recalls one time when one of the American soldiers got upset with an Iraqi cadet and decided that the cadet should leave. The soldier started to use the Arabic word *emshi*, which is an order to walk. The cadet was offended when he heard this word, but Dina told him that the word was not directed to him, and the soldier only wanted to show off his personal collection of the Arabic words he had learned so far. Fortunately, the matter ended at this point.

In Iraq, it is very important to comply with social norms when it comes to culture because they have the final word, not the grammatical or lingual aspects. If a translator in a war zone offends his society in any form, his life might be jeopardized and eventually lost because "Translation can be studied as one of the strategies cultures develop to deal

with what lies outside their boundaries and to maintain their own character while doing so - the kind of strategy that ultimately belongs in the realm of change and survival, not in dictionaries and grammar.” (Bassnett 1990:10). To comment on this argument, the incident that took place in February, 2004 is sufficient. Two American soldiers wanted some work to be done by Iraqi contractors. During the dialogue, one of the soldiers said that if the work was not completed, he would do a *drive-by*. Dina was not familiar with this expression, so, the soldier explained it to her. The expression was funny for the U.S. soldiers, but not to the Iraqis. She had to censor this expression and replace it by saying that the soldiers would not be happy in case the work was delayed. Perhaps Iraqis would accept this expression from another Iraqi person, but they would never accept it from an American soldier. Another cultural problem she had to deal with was the use of her nickname. Some of her soldier friends used to call Dina by her nickname, and this caused a huge source of embarrassment because in Iraq, it is not acceptable at all to use nicknames at work especially for women. The issue is that American soldiers sometimes forget and they start using nicknames for translators in public. Of primary importance in the translation event is the communication of the intended message. If cultural norms are violated, the communication event does not ensue, and the translation fails. Thus, the necessity of occasional deletions and shifts of expressions becomes vital.

As for physical censorship, it was a tedious task to accomplish due to the difficulty in controlling the physical actions of the parties involved. According to my personal experience, I can define the term “physical censorship” as the methodology adopted by the translator to avoid being a target either by adjusting the translation of certain physical actions or by ignoring the other party in the first place depending on the situation at a given circumstance.

There were occasions when Dina had to correct a physical gesture of an American soldier. For instance, there is a movement with the hand that represents patience in Iraq; but if a person flips his hand, the connotation becomes a very offensive word. One of the soldiers used the wrong movement, and Dina had to interfere saying that the soldier made a mistake and forgot to distinguish between the two signs. Such subtle body language was often a critical factor in survival. One day the base had to be closed for a week because of a political crisis in June, 2004. After the week was over, classes resumed. When Dina entered the Academy heading to her office, she saw two soldiers who were her best friends. Because there were so many Iraqi policemen in the way, she could not greet her American friends and thus ignored them, fearing she would become a potential target. So she waited until after entering the office and then they greeted each other. Another instance occurred at one of the graduation ceremonies in September, 2003 when one of the soldiers was trying to shake hands with Dina. Shaking hands was the most difficult cultural aspect she had to deal with. It represents a sign of respect in American culture, while in Iraqi tradition it is rejected because there is not supposed to be a skin-to-skin contact between men and women. During the graduation ceremony, she had to censor the action of shaking hands with some American soldiers and civilians.

Sometimes, censorship would give Dina the feeling of duality. In other words, as a translator, she had to adopt different ideas regarding the same situation. For example, in the office, she would talk to her American employers, friends, soldiers, and civilians. However, outside the office, she would have to act as if she did not know them.

The situation for Iraqi translators changed dramatically in early 2004. Iraqi people had started to view translators as traitors and spies who deserve death, on a number of counts.

First, translators get paid by American contracting companies, and this is a sign of collaborating with *the foreigners*. Second, translators are Iraqi citizens and they are supposed to fight the Americans, according to radical militia men. Third, targeting translators would make it harder for the Americans to communicate with the Iraqis. Fourth, there is no organization, union, or party in Iraq that guarantees the rights of Iraqi translators, offers protection, or issues secure identification cards. The Iraqi Translators Union closed its doors during the war and re-opened in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Baghdad. It became impossible to reach the Union due to the extreme surveillance by insurgents. Besides, the IDs issued for translators are valid for one year only, so translators became an easy, or in fact the easiest target in the Iraqi street. The most important reason is that they are not protected by the United States of America. This country did not fulfill its promises for a better prospect in Iraq. The Iraqi translators have been neglected despite the priceless bilingual services they have provided for the United States Army. According to a report titled *Iraqi Translators: Visas or Death?* (2007) on CBS News, Iraqi interpreters “have almost no chance to get visas to enter the United States. There are close to 10,000 translators in Iraq alone — but until now, only 50 special visas to the U.S. have been available each year for both Iraq and Afghanistan.” (Logan 2007). So far, this has been the most prejudicial procedure taken against Iraqi translators. It has pushed the Iraqi translators, who were unlucky enough to obtain a visa, to conceal their identities completely in order to avoid retaliation against them and their families.

Iraqi translators did not receive hazard fees in addition to the lack of protection. According to an article titled “Iraqi Translators Die by the Dozens” (2005) published by USATODAY, translation is “one of the most dangerous civilian jobs in one of the world's

most dangerous countries: translating Arabic for the U.S. military in Iraq.” And yet no measures have been taken to protect them. From early 2004 until Dina traveled abroad in 2005 when she began strongly to exercise both verbal and physical censorship because there were fatwas released by radicals in Iraq that says whoever cooperates with the Americans and works for them must be slaughtered as s/he is a traitor. Because the fatwas’ leaflets were distributed in the streets of Baghdad randomly, it made it harder to recognize the cleric behind them, if they were issued by clerics in the first place.

She was very careful with the language used especially when translating into Arabic. Dina would always give false information regarding the company she worked for. She censored the source of her income. She was asked countless times about who paid her salary. The answer would be the Ministry of Interior (MOI) rather than saying it was Halliburton Company. Dina has been through tough situations when she has had to choose between her profession and her life. For instance, she had to translate for a group of Iraqi cadets who came late to classes. Both the American soldier and the Iraqi supervisor asked for Dina’s translation services. She was in a completely uncomfortable situation. She went with both sides in an attempt to resolve the issue. The Iraqi supervisor started to shout at the late cadets by using some disrespectful words. The cadets were even more ashamed because a woman [Dina] was present. Eventually, she could not translate for either side and pulled out quietly. Her boss understood the situation and how hard it was for a woman to translate in that unpleasant situation. Dina was able to maintain her life by stepping back, as she had with the Iraqi cadets. She censored every single unaccepted word spoken by the Americans. She would always try to manipulate the translation in a way that would please everybody,

especially the Iraqis, because it was her life at risk, not the soldiers' as they rarely leave their base and when they do, they leave in groups.

It is true that censorship is not entirely healthy; however, it has its fruitful results in Dina's situation. For example, one of the aspects of physical censorship she conducted was hiding her identity from public appearances as much as she could. She would rarely be seen by cadets moving outside the office. She would *very* rarely be seen publicly accompanying American soldiers. Also, she would scarcely greet soldiers in the presence of other Iraqi cadets. Moreover, she would never shake hands with American soldiers or civilians in public. Despite the essential role played by the Iraqi translators, their efforts are little appreciated or recognized. I have a very strong belief in my profession as a translator. I believe that without our efforts, both the Iraqis and Americans would be completely lost. I do not agree with individuals who say that translators *represent* the bridge between two different languages and cultures. I say that we *are* the bridge that connects the world. However, the image of Iraqi translators has deteriorated since early 2004. Translators have been threatened, kidnapped, and killed in Iraq. According to a report released by the PEN Organization in 2007, statistics signify that "Since the start of the war, 257 Iraqi interpreters have been killed, says Titan Corporation of San Diego, which just completed a five-year, \$4.6 billion Pentagon contract to provide linguists to U.S. forces. Most of those killed were assassinated while on home leave, the company says." (Millman and Chon 2007).

In the beginning, translators started to receive written threats, text messages, and verbal threats warning them to leave their jobs with the Coalition Forces or face death. Later, those written threats disappeared and translators started to be killed without any previous warning because it was considered that the message is received. That is, if you already work

for the Americans, then you realize the consequences. Leaflets offering rewards for translators' heads were circulated around the country. Most of the rewards in the beginning were about \$5000, and then they were reduced to about \$200. Yet the wages of the translators were kept the same, and when salaries were raised, the raise did not exceed a couple hundred dollars compared to the extreme hazards of the job. It is definitely a war zone in Iraq, but amid this mayhem, one thing matters, that is to be unbiased and credible in addition to protecting one's life. A translator does not become a hero when turning one side against another. One might argue that in a situation like Iraq, it is impossible to be unbiased. I would agree with that depending on the situation. Translation and interpretation are completely different from those of texts and written materials. However, it is important to keep the essence of the message. Dina did not translate everything; however, she delivered the message taking into consideration the factors of culture, society, situation, parties involved, and her personal safety. She admits that it was hard to balance between the Iraqis, her people, and the Americans, her employers; so, she decided to be as neutral as possible.

We, the Iraqi translators, have given so much for our country in order to help our people and the Americans hand in hand. Some of us have sacrificed their families others have sacrificed their lives. Dina has lost two professors who had worked at the American Embassy in Baghdad. In addition, she has lost several colleagues at the base where she worked. One of them used to speak English so well that he was called *the American guy*. He was executed in front of his house because of his cooperation with the Americans.

Dina admits that her personal experience with the United States Army was dangerous but wonderful and very fruitful at the same time. The nightmare of the job starts with the daily trip to work but ends when Dina enters the military base. She did acknowledge the fact

that death is part of the equation, yet kept her job as every body is targeted. Sometimes, it was embarrassing to deal with the soldiers' questions, comments, thoughts, and sometimes the way they would pronounce words. Dina remembers one time when one of the American soldiers was asking about the Arabic word for coffee. In Arabic, the word *coffee* shares the same initial and final letters of the English word *prostitute*. Mistakenly, the soldier used the Arabic word for prostitute instead of coffee. Dina was tolerant enough to explain to the man his mistake and clarified the difference.

The central concern of Iraqi translators is how visible or invisible they should be. In his book titled *The Translator's Invisibility: a History of Translation* (1995), Lawrence Venuti defines the concept of invisibility as "The term I will use to describe the translator's situation and activity in contemporary Anglo-American culture." (Venuti 1995:1). According to Venuti, one of the categories of the invisibility is the translator's ability to maneuver the translation (1995:1). Venuti's argument can be best applied to the written or textual translation, and there is no mention of a vocal or oral interpretation. I believe that the translator's visibility exists whether it is written or oral translation/interpretation. However, the issue is that the quality of translation will vary according to the situation in hand. In other words, a translator in a safe place has the time to translate, use the dictionary, and edit his translation. But, in a situation like the Iraqi one where there is war, how should the translator decide the quality of his translation? And what are the factors that specify this quality? Venuti's argument is applied to the translation of texts in which the translator is supposed to hide his existence and make the reader that the translation in his/her hands represents the genuine text. Within the Iraqi situation, there is no place for invisibility. The translator is the cornerstone in any conversation. According to my own experience, I believe that if the

translator becomes invisible, then the entire conversation will collapse. Translators can heavily influence the course of the conversation. If they are biased to a certain side, then the quality of translation would be poor, a matter leads to losing the most important aspect within the field of translation, which is credibility. At the same time, I think that the degree of credibility depends on the situation at hand and the parties involved. It is hard to adopt Venuti's concept of invisibility in the field because the degree of invisibility is decided by the situation. In Iraq, translators have voices, but they often fall on deaf ears. The best thing I can accomplish to help my fellow translators is to talk about the dangers we and our families face every day, and how we deal with those hazards. It is a completely different situation when translating in a war zone from sitting in a safe place; so, the result is "To survive in such a climate . . . usually takes the form of self-censorship." (PEN Organization 2003:4), according to a report published by PEN Organization in November, 2003. What kills the Iraqi translators today more than bullets is that we are considered spies and traitors by some people who have little idea about the basics of our job or the oath we have sworn upon graduation. Most of those individuals lack the skill translators possess; that is the key of knowledge to communicate in more than one language.

In fact, the main issue that the young Iraqi translator faced is the issue of cultural awareness. Drawing on my documentation of Dina's experience with the American Army, I think that Americans in general have limited knowledge about Iraq, its traditions, customs, and even the culture, so to speak. This reality has stimulated me to conduct a survey to find out how much Americans know about Iraq and its people. The questions are stated in two tables below.

The reason I have conducted this survey is that I have noticed the lack of cultural awareness in the United States in matters related to Iraq. When the cultural gap is particularly wide between two cultures, it becomes increasingly complex for the translators to facilitate the communication. Consequently, I decided to discover whether this scarcity in information is attributed to the media, the government, or personal cautiousness. I have gathered one hundred and five responses from undergraduate students at the University of Massachusetts, ages 19-22, both males and females. Some of these undergraduate students are current army cadets who might go to Iraq in the future. The survey is not a scientific sample, and there is a large margin for error.

Table 1: Yes/No Answers

Questions	Yes	No	I don't know/ not interested
Have you ever taken at least one class about Iraq and the Middle East?	20 %	77 %	1 %
Have you ever traveled to Iraq or the Middle East?	9 %	89 %	0 %
Can you locate Iraq on the map?	91 %	5 %	2 %
Do you trust American media regarding Iraq?	6 %	78 %	14 %

Table 2: Multiple Choice Answers

Questions	Answers			
Which of the following is the capital of Iraq?	Mousal (0 %)	Baghdad (88 %)	Basra (0 %)	I don't know (10 %)
How would you evaluate women's situation in Iraq?	Free (13 %)	Oppressed (58 %)	Have no rights at all (10 %)	I don't know (17 %)
How would you evaluate the situation in Iraq?	Better than Media reports (52 %)	Worse than Media reports (24 %)	Exactly as Media reports (0 %)	I don't know (21 %)

As might be expected, the results of the survey are contradictory and hardly conclusive. Nevertheless, for me, they reflect certain attitudes. Depending on some of the reactions I have faced when asking undergraduate students to participate in my survey, I think that media in the United States is responsible, to a large extent, for the lack of cultural awareness of Iraq. My point is that there is a scarcity in exchanging information about Iraq and presenting this country culturally to American viewers. As a result, American soldiers, who serve in Iraq, go to that country poorly prepared to its culture, religion, and tradition, add to that covering the daily events over there. All what Americans watch in the news is how many Iraqis have died today or how high the percentage of sectarian violence is. For example, seventy-eight percent mentioned that they do not trust the American Media that cover the situation in Iraq. This percentage is surprising because I think that it proves that the American viewer, in general, does not believe that the coverage is complete, accurate, and honest. It is axiomatic that “Media institutions are expected not to publish or broadcast ‘sensitive’ information, without any clear definition of what is to be deemed sensitive. The flip-side to all this ‘protection of sensitivities’ is the concealment of information- or quite simply, censorship.” (Nain 2002:130). However, the question is how much information should the viewer be denied? After the war in Iraq in 2003, the focus started on the cultural programs that are designated to educate the American viewer about Iraqi culture, religion, and tradition. Also, when I asked students about women’s situation in Iraq, the answers varied. Fifty-eight percent say that Iraqi women are oppressed, while thirteen percent mention that they are free. In addition, ten percent say that those women have no rights at all, and seventeen percent say that they do not know the situation of women accurately. I have asked some students about their opinions and why they believe that Iraqi women are

oppressed. One of the students said that Iraqi women are oppressed because they are forced to wear the veil by the males in their families. Another student mentioned that women in Iraq are oppressed because of arranged marriages. Some students mentioned that Iraqi women are oppressed because they do not have as equal rights as men. Others agree on the reason of oppression as Iraqi women do not have the independence required to choose their careers, hold high positions, and even travel by themselves. Obviously, the aspects of Iraqi society are vague for most of those American students. In other words, the American viewer cannot distinguish between the traditions and religion in Iraq. According to some students who took part in the survey, Iraqi women are denied their rights, and have no freedom. The concept of freedom is yet another subject of controversy between the East and the West. What sounds like freedom in Western eyes represents immorality in Eastern ones. Freedom is a relative concept, and for Iraqi women, freedom is represented in the ability to participate in developing the country and promoting the society. All the rights of Iraqi women are guaranteed. There is nothing wrong with religion and laws in Iraq, but there is something wrong with individuals responsible for applying those laws.

The differences between the East and the West spring from the wrong angle each side perceives the other without a common background of understanding. That is, the values and morals in the East are not close to those in the West; yet individuals search for what divides the two sides, not what unites them due to the fear of those differences and possible clashes that might result. Here, the aspect of self-censorship plays a major role in both sides. The East, on one hand, is not interested in learning about the values of the West because they represent immorality. On the other, the West does not want to be informed about the Eastern values because they represent fanaticism and extremism. Thus, the empty cycle of self-

censorship continues leading to a complete misunderstanding between the two worlds. In general, the issue of self-censorship exists in the East and the West depending on the circumstances. For example, in Iraq, self-censorship after the war in 2003 has increased especially among individuals who work as translators. The documented story as narrated by Ms. Dina is a solid example of self-censorship in a war zone.

Self-censorship also exists in the United States as a Western country that does not suffer from wars on its soil. Self-censorship comes as a reaction to the false concepts perpetuated by the media in this country, a matter which has led to scarcity in information about Iraq and the Middle East. Lack of cultural awareness is the result of media censorship and self-censorship in the United States. In other words, Americans are misinformed about Iraqi society generally and Iraqi women specifically. Women are depicted as the weaker gender, oppressed, without any rights, and completely veiled from top to bottom. This picture has perpetuated the negative perception that already exists about Arabs and Muslims. After the war in Afghanistan, media sources scarcely offer a positive report about Muslims, and if they are mentioned, then their name is always associated with terrorism. For example, many shows such as *24* (2001) and *Sleeper Cell* (2005) on American television picture Muslims and Arabs as terrorists. In addition, the media in the United States is bias when reporting news in Iraq. For example, sectarian titles such as Sunni and Shiite are used when reporting casualties in Iraq, and I can say that people here ask me about the background of the sectarian violence when they know that I am from Iraq, thinking that it is a conflict between the Iraqis themselves.

Now, I would like to move to the other critical point which is the difference between a translator in a war zone and that in a safe one. The difference is that the latter is more

faithful to the profession of translation. That is, he or she focuses more on delivering the message as close as possible to the original work. On the other hand, a translator who works in a war zone concentrates on his or her safety first even if this means misrepresenting the original message. It is true that destroying the original message is harmful, yet preserving one's life is more important. By destroying the message, I mean that a translator in a war zone avoids translating or interpreting words he/she thinks they will cause a cultural misunderstanding or jeopardize his or her life. For instance, translating inappropriate or offensive words will not help the translator or the American soldier even when some soldiers demand that insulting words be translated. I can further support this argument by a situation Dina experienced. She was interpreting for a meeting in December 2003. The parties were Dina's American employers and an Iraqi Imam\* who was sent by some residents to resolve some issues. After almost an hour of translation, the issues were not resolved. The Imam was a persistent man and so were the American employers. One of them was very frustrated, and he actually escorted the Imam out. Dina had to interfere to prevent a crisis because this is not the way to deal with any Imam. It was really important for the employers to understand the concept of *Imamship*. This person constitutes the leader of his community, and if he is insulted by *the foreigners*, his entire community is also insulted. Fortunately, Dina was able to solve the situation. Before he left, the Imam told her that she should quit her job with the Americans because they are Christians, and she was not supposed to work for them. When her employer inquired about the conversation, Dina censored the entire conversation. She did not tell her boss a single word. The translator's main and sole concern is his life and his family's as the geopolitical elements in that war zone determine the quality of translation

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\* Imam: a religious title that has many connotations. It mainly refers to Prophet Mohammad's family males. It could also refer to the person who heads a group when praying in a mosque.

delivered. In addition, the rights of the translator in a safe zone are more guaranteed since the organizations that protect his rights operate properly, while those of a translator in a war zone, such as Iraq in this case, are constantly violated because of the chaotic circumstances that hinder the process of protecting translators' rights. As a result, we find more casualties and human rights violations in war zones since respecting the laws and observing the human rights charter do not exist.

Translation, as an extremely perilous profession in Iraq, plays a major role for the Iraqi individual in deciding the background of the translator and his or her political and religious affiliations because "Translation moved to the fore as an issue of major political and cultural significance. No longer deemed a mere instrument of international relations, business, education, and culture, translation took on special relevance as a matter of war and peace." (Apter 2006:3). In fact, the issue of translation and its correlation to human ethics and morals is complicated. The credibility of translation has always been under suspicion. The main question here is which one should prevail when translating a text or interpreting a conversation, personal morals, cultural norms, professional ethics, or circumstances on the ground? Douglas Robinson argues that "Translators, like all professionals, want to take pride in what they do; if a serious clash between their personal ethics and an externally defined professional ethics makes it difficult or impossible to feel that pride, they will eventually be forced to make dramatic decisions about where and under what conditions they want to work." (Robinson 2003:26). In a war situation as the one in Iraq, translation is highly affected by the surrounding circumstances. In other words, a translator does not pay much attention to professional morals and ethics that demand delivering honest and complete translation. The reason for that is the reality that if he or she does so, then his or her life

would be jeopardized. Thus, the true message does not see the light in a war zone. The remaining issue is deciding the criteria for when and how to deliver a complete translation in a war zone in contrast to that in a peaceful place.

## CONCLUSION

My study within the field of translation comes to present another resource concerning the issue of translation and how it relates to culture and censorship in the Middle East. I selected one of the most conservative countries in the region which is Saudi Arabia. I was motivated by the countless limitations to explore the barred atmosphere of this country. I discovered that the fatwas in Saudi Arabia are the main machine that controls the country. These fatwas are released by Saudi clerics to clarify different issues in the society as Islam is the only religion in the Kingdom. Yet, I was more interested in the contents of those fatwas that make the Saudi society the way it is. I must say I was surprised by the amount of hatred, revenge, and disrespect towards non-Muslims and the Shiite Muslims. It is unrealistic how those religious fatwas would order Saudis to refrain from saving other human beings just because they have faiths different from Wahhabism. This made me wonder why I carry different ethics despite following Islam, and the answers were in the fatwas.

Within my research, I explored another country in the Middle East, which is Iraq. I studied the relation between translation and censorship and how culture impacted both concepts. Censorship in Iraq has affected the field of translation because of the extreme monitoring of books written in foreign languages which deal with topics of democracy, freedom and tolerance. As a result, many important books that criticize totalitarian regimes have been banned. The subsequent wars that Iraq has undergone affected all the educational fields in general. As a result, the level of education, consciousness to the current events, and awareness has dramatically deteriorated in Iraq. The economic sanctions after the Gulf War in 1991 played a major role in depriving thousands of Iraqis of the education necessary to improve their knowledge and expand their horizons. The sanctions were directed against the

Iraqi people and not the despotic government of Saddam Hussein. This has caused a lack of consciousness that exists in a large layer of Iraqi society. Censoring books that deal with the real situation in Iraq has been a constant aim of the Hussein government in order to exterminate any opportunity for rebelling against oppression, tyranny, and absolute domination. During the reign of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath government, censorship mainly was political and religious. That is, Iraqis avoided political and religious activities as much as possible because the Ba'ath government perceived those activities as a threat to the national security.

I have discovered that censorship during that period became more intensive in all levels whether political, social, or economic. In other words, Iraqi individuals adopted censorship to maintain their lives. Censorship has taken a different structure after the war in 2003. The new shape included all aspects of daily life. Iraqis started to monitor themselves because of the collapse of the central government, a matter which has eliminated the possibility of identifying the oppressive party.

Generally, the difference between censorship in Saudi Arabia and Iraq is that the first country imposes censorship under the pretext of preserving religion and morality in the Saudi society. Both *Cities of Salt: The Desert* and *The Girls of Riyadh* deal with sensitive issues in the Saudi society. The first deals with how political relations become more significant than family and tribal relations when wealth and geopolitical interests are involved, while the second novel deals with the most private issue in Saudi society, namely, the world of women and how they live in a society that is more than just male-dominated but completely controlled by traditions and cultural norms that suffocate women in their homes.

Despite the fact that both censored novels I have addressed in Saudi Arabia are written in Arabic, they were banned because their effect on the Saudi reader is stronger than that of a foreign novel. The reason is that societies in the Middle East generally share a state of denial. In other words, they do not want to recognize a problem, especially when it comes to women, because it would be a source of shame. When readers are denied such novels, they are denied a big portion of their culture and heritage. Thus, they become completely convinced that the society they live in is a utopian one and there is no place for immorality, corruption or dishonesty, and if there is something immoral, then it cannot happen to them. In fact, the Saudi society is governed by a dictatorship under the name of religion.

As for the situation in Iraq, censorship is a distinguishing feature in this country; yet, it took a different form which is the form of military dictatorship. The military dictatorship always attempts to suppress people's free thinking and take away their will to fight in order for that dictatorship to survive and last. On the other side, the religious censorship tries to deprive individuals of their rights, which are guaranteed under religion, in order to minimize the rights people have for a long term. The difference between the military censorship and the religious one is that it is easier to get rid of the residue of the first because its effects are temporary and they start to diminish, while the religious one lasts for a long time due to people's strong attachment to religion. Sometimes, people in the Middle East confuse religion with culture and traditions. For instance, there is no verse in the Quran that requires women to dress in black clothes only, yet we find this custom widely common in the Gulf countries. The fact that people are deprived of the knowledge of the differences among religions, cultures and traditions, is unfortunate. However, more and more boundaries are being broken, and many subjects considered taboo once are being discussed nowadays.

Yearning to address new subjects and concepts has just started in Iraq. After the war in 2003, translation in Iraq adopted a new trend. The new phenomenon included translating books that deal with the new concepts of freedom and democracy. For instance, Dar al-Ma'mun for Translation and Publishing has published a book titled *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (1999) by Larry Jay Diamond. It was translated by an Iraqi woman, Fawziya N. Al-Refa'i, and a new Arabic book titled *Books in Criticism and Translation* by Inad Ghazwan published by the Cultural Affair House. Moreover, there is a new series of translated books that deals with tolerance and multiculturalism. The series is called 'Culture of Tolerance', and it includes books translated from English such as *A Message in Tolerance* by John Luke published by the Center of Religion Philosophy Studies in Baghdad. These new books in Iraq open new doors for the coming generations to learn how to accept other opinions and to be more tolerant to different ethnicities and religions, and to teach them that difference is a blessing not a curse.

I hope that the documentation mentioned would be an extra source for future scholars to take a deeper look inside Iraq. I encourage future scholars to take steps, do research, and document their own experiences during the Ba'ath regime. The Ba'ath Party and Saddam Hussein have diminished; now it is up to the Iraqis to disclose their experience and participate in the constant efforts to document as many tragedies as possible in order to be able to remove all the negative traces of the former regime. According to statistics presented by The Iraq Memory Foundation and Iraq Research and Documentation Project (IRDP) established by Kanan Makiya, there are close to ten million documents digitized on one hundred and seventy six CDs in order to enable the public to view the policies and methods of the previous Iraqi government. Oral documentation is one of the main methods used by the

founder of The Iraq Memory Foundation since it serves as an extra source of communicating tragic events in Iraq. Many people's stories can be found on the foundation's website at [www.iraqmemory.org](http://www.iraqmemory.org). For instance, one of the stories is about two brother named Ibrahim and Sa'ad Mohammed Al-Qaisi who spent twenty-three years (from 1980 to 2003) hiding in a room at their house in Baghdad after Al-Ba'ath executed their father, brother, and pregnant sister. They could not remember their names because of the long period of hiding.

The profession of translation in Iraq has a long path to overcome the tremendous barriers, the biggest of which is the security problem. In fact, the lack of security in Iraq is one of the main factors that weakened Iraqi translators and the way they translate. Future Iraqi generations share the responsibility to rebuild the country and secure its future. The distressful past is part of our personalities in Iraq; yet, we should not allow it to control our thinking and way of life because it is impossible to pursue living in a peaceful environment while carrying closed-mindedness of previous periods.

Within the course of my research, I think that more studies should be conducted to translate every written article, book, and magazine that discusses democracy and freedom. As a translator, I intend to specify part of my efforts for this objective. I also intend to translate all the fatwas of the Wahhabism and argue them in a scientific and logical approach, away from religious and tribal fanaticism because the world has become a small village and it is impossible to peacefully coexist with people of different faiths if persecution of personal rights continues.

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