

DOI: 10.2478/rjes-2025-0008

**DIPLOMATIC FRAMING OF LITERATURE:
THE YEAR OF THE ELEPHANT AS A CASE STUDY**

ABDELMAJID MADANI

Mohammed V University, Morocco

Abstract: *This paper seeks to assess the possibility of framing literature in diplomacy to promote Morocco's image abroad based on the novel *The Year of the Elephant*, written in Arabic by Leila Abouzeid and translated into English by Barbara Parmenter. It discusses concepts such as cultural diplomacy, soft power, and imagology. It also provides insight into the practice of cultural diplomacy in Morocco, highlighting a number of Moroccan authors whose works have been translated into English. Its analysis extends to gauging the image portrayed in the text under consideration. The findings indicate that although the novel succeeds in honoring Moroccans' bravery and struggle for Independence, paying tribute to female contributions to the resistance movement to drive French occupation out of the country despite some patriarchal setbacks, it does offer a negative representation of the Jewish community in Morocco. In spite of downplaying astrological practices undertaken in the country, it celebrates Sufism as a mystical practice that purifies one's soul, drawing attention to Moroccan spirituality.*

Key words: *cultural diplomacy; framing literature; Moroccan literature; literary translation; Sufism.*

1. Introduction

Global interconnectedness has incessantly been challenging the sovereignty of the nation-state. As the scope of Internet access broadens, it becomes hard for countries to maintain their hold over public opinion, let alone shape it (Nye 2011:113). Different groups have developed their own communication strategies to tell their stories of events, which do not necessarily align with the official ones. Against this backdrop, individuals' perceptions are framed depending on the situation and the content put at their disposal, which takes into account the nature of the message addressed to them. Such a pressing situation prompts States to reassess their approaches to preserve their constituents' loyalty to issues of great interest to them.

In addition to the dissemination of power over opinion to non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations, religious and political groups, and individual influencers, States vie for international leadership. They deploy multiple power resources and communication strategies to affect foreign public opinion in return for political and economic gains via a number of actions, including the brokering of relationships between national non-governmental actors and their foreign counterparts, academic and cultural exchanges, involvement in voluntary work, and so on. These activities fall within the field of public diplomacy, which is defined as "the country's communication and engagement with foreign publics in order to support national interests" (Hartig 2016:1). According to Leonard et al. (2002:9), public diplomacy has four main roles: (1) increasing familiarity, (2) increasing appreciation, (3) engaging people, and (4) influencing people's behavior. Leonard et al. (2002:9-18) state that public diplomacy rests on the premise that the image and reputation of a country are effective tools in shaping the environment for "individual transactions".

To achieve public diplomacy aims, Leonard et al. (2002:9-18) suggest the effective handling of daily communication; the organization of attractive events that draw the public's attention and capture its imagination; the adoption of a set of measures, including the granting

of scholarships; the encouragement of exchanges; the organization of trainings, seminars, and conferences; and the development of relationships among peers. Alongside the employment of a panoply of such tools, countries draw on their cultural heritage to attract the foreign public's attention to their perspectives. The use of culture in diplomacy is referred to as cultural diplomacy, which is indeed a subset of public diplomacy (Schneider 2005:147). It was elaborated by Milton Cummings (Einbinder 2013:8), and it involves "the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding" (Cummings 2004:1).

In a broader perspective, art is regarded by Marxists as one facet of society's superstructure and ideology that is deployed in the process of power legitimacy (Eagleton 2002:5). According to Eagleton (2002:17), art enables us to visualize and understand the nature of ideology. Actually, art is instrumentalized by nation-states to serve their interests abroad, exceeding the threshold of traditional direct methods as long as the aim is to serve their national and foreign policies. In this regard, Baker (2006:68) states that translators are instrumentalized to inculcate an appropriately selected narrative. Following the same line of reasoning, Luise Vow Flotow (2007) (as cited in Ping 2014:62) states that cultural diplomacy is a methodology nations and governments resort to in projecting their cultures abroad to make themselves attractive and influence other countries, stressing the idea that the practice of translating literature is carried out by many institutions of cultural diplomacy, including Confucian colleges, to disseminate Chinese culture all over the world. Flotow (2007) highlights, in this regard, the Chinese project to translate classical "Chinese texts of philosophy, knowledge, and metaphysics into many other languages" (2007:62). She further points out that usually uncritical literature is approved of and selected by governments (2007:62).

Indeed, the practice of literary instrumentalization has been constantly evolving. In studying US cultural policy adopted during the Cold War, Saunders (2009) uncovers the motives behind the publication and translation of US authors such as Frederick A. Praeger in European centers to combat Soviet propaganda and project the US vision and cultural model, targeting the left-wing elite. To implement such a strategy, the US funded many journals like *Congress for Cultural Freedom and Encounter* magazine, and European journals, namely *Partisan Review*, *Kenyon Review*, and *New Leader*. It then sponsored and promoted intellectuals like Hannah Arendt, Isaiah Berlin, and others. There was also the adaptation of George Orwell's novels *Animal Farm* and *1984* into movies. The list of translations was not limited to books, including Doctor Zhivago, but was extended to others written by authors like T.S. Eliot, Chekov, and others.

So far, very few studies and journalistic contributions have pinpointed the need to frame Moroccan literature in support of Moroccan cultural diplomacy and disseminate Moroccan soft power abroad, which invites an assessment of the relevance of such literature to see **to what extent** a literary work can be deployed in the process of image cultivation, raising the following questions:

1. How is the image of the country depicted in a literary work?
2. To what extent can a literary work be instrumentalized to serve cultural diplomacy objectives?

To answer the above questions, I am going to study the novel *The Year of the Elephant*, written in Arabic by Leila Abouzeid and translated into English by Barbara Parmenter, analyzing its representation of Morocco and its diplomatic relevance.

2. Review of Literature

Literature is a form of narrative that, in addition to its poetic and entertaining value, vehicles the creator's ontological experience. Such an expressive value belongs to a certain frame of reference and interacts in a certain way or another with different frames and narratives.

According to Bennett and Edelman (1985, as stated in Baker 2006:19), narratives shape individuals' worldviews and perceptions. Indeed, Somers (1992:1997) and Somers and Gibson (1994), as cited in Baker (2006:5), distinguish between four types of narratives: (1) ontological, (2) public, (3) conceptual, and (4) meta. Ontological narratives revolve around personal experiences in relation to the social environment, whereas public narratives have a collective feature developed largely by an institution or a community. Still, conceptual narratives are scholarly elaborations to account for and construe certain aspects of reality. Finally, meta-narratives include public narratives that have been entrenched in history and/or that have acquired a transcendental value circulated at a large scale, like those of the Enlightenment, Progress, Modernity, and so on (2006:45). In this regard, Baker (2006:23) states that narratives are framed in the process of the reinforcement and contestation of power structures.

The question of power has been elaborately expounded and delineated by Joseph Nye (2004). Nye (2004:1) links power to the accomplishment of the "outcomes one wants" listing three manners deployed in this regard: threat, payment, and attraction, believing that command and coercion comprise only a facet of power, stressing the need for "well-designed and skillful leadership", indicating that sometimes behavior is "affected without commanding" (2004:2). The latter indirect way to attract instead of coerce has been termed by Nye (2004:5) as soft power. It does not rely on hard power, as is the case with the Vatican (2004:7). Nye (2004:31) compares international politics to a three-dimensional game in which a State has to deploy all its resources, playing vertically and horizontally, to win the game, indicating that four elements pave the way for soft power: (1) values, (2) policies, (3) institutions, and (4) culture.

To project their soft power abroad, many countries have developed different models for their cultural diplomacy. For example, India has deployed a remarkable array of activities to serve its cultural diplomacy, relying on the organization of festivals around the world, the cultivation of the Indian diaspora, and the conclusion of cultural agreements with countries, e.g., Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar (Pratap 2015). It has also launched another program, the *Know India Program*, in favor of Indian diaspora youth to visit India for three weeks to strengthen their ties with the country of origin. Today, India uses Buddhism as a tool to both neutralize Chinese soft power and promote its culture worldwide, in tandem with cinema and yoga practice (Pratap 2015). Essentially, Bollywood has become increasingly influential and competitive with Hollywood worldwide.

Chinese cultural diplomacy relies on several strategies to serve Chinese soft power. It produces white papers to explain to the world the situation in China, underscoring the idea of a peaceful rise and international commitments and explaining China's policy positions (Wang 2008). In addition to organizing cultural festivals, mega events, and loan exhibitions of Chinese art, as well as granting scholarships to foreign students, China has set up at least 516 cultural centers and Confucius Institutes, which supervise 1,076 Confucius classrooms teaching the Chinese language and enhancing understanding of Chinese culture. Add to that the launch of its global network broadcasting in English, Spanish, French, Arabic, and Russian.

The United States of America was engaged in enhancing its cultural presence throughout the world when Germany was trying to penetrate Latin America culturally to weaken US cultural relations with these countries (Cumming 2009:3). In 1936, both the US and Argentina signed a convention for the promotion of inter-American cultural relations via the exchange of people and intellectual cooperation. In 1946, a new cultural program, the Fulbright program, was adopted to foster cultural exchange with foreign countries. Until the year 1993, the program had benefited 250,000 applicants. There was also the organization of art exhibitions abroad by American painters such as William Gropper, Philip Guston, Robert Gwathmey, Marsden Hartley, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Jack Levine, Georgia O'Keeffe, Anton Refregier, and Charles Sheeler (2009:6).

During the Cold War, the US organized tours for performing artists, including jazz groups, and financed cultural magazines overseas to keep in touch with artists and intellectuals in foreign countries. Jazz music was used as a foreign policy strategy to combat Soviet propaganda within the Soviet Union and other countries, reflecting democracy, diversity, and the tolerance of criticism. The list of artists included performers like Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, and Benny Goodman (Perrigo 2017). This music was also broadcast by the VOA network via Conover's show known as "Jazz Hour" (Ritter 2013:111).

Regarding Moroccan cultural diplomacy, Kenbib and Aydon (2015:27-29) indicate that ten institutions and departments contribute to Moroccan cultural diplomacy: (1) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; (2) the Ministry of Culture; (3) the Ministry Delegate in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs; (4) the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs; (5) the Ministry of Higher Education; (6) the Ministry of Tourism and the Moroccan National Office of Tourism; (7) the Ministry of Handicrafts; (8) the Ministry of Communication; (9) Hassan II Foundation for Moroccans Residing Abroad; and (10) the Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad.

Actually, Morocco conducts its cultural diplomacy through participation in foreign fairs and forums, as well as the organization of cultural events and meetings about Moroccan culture and patrimony abroad. In this way, the Moroccan Embassy in France invites prominent figures to its activity, "Mercredi de l'Ambassade" (Embassy's Wednesday), to present and discuss books written by Moroccans or about Morocco. Right now, there are two Moroccan cultural centers abroad, situated in Montreal (Canada) and Amsterdam (Holland), awaiting the opening of a third one in Paris (France). Morocco also provides scholarships for foreign students. In 2007, the number of scholarships awarded to African students reached 8,000 (Dasii 2017). In addition to that, it organizes international festivals and offers Arabic language classes and information about Moroccan history, geography, institutions, and culture via its website (www.e-taqafa.ma) (Kembib and Aydon 2015:28).

Kembib and Aydon (2015:79) further emphasize the need to disseminate Moroccan literature abroad, suggesting the translation of Moroccan literary works into foreign languages. Such an initiative may help in the reshaping of the image circulated about Morocco in literature. In this way, Leila Abouzeid accentuates the idea that the literature mediated to American readers via Paul Bowles reflects a distorted image of Morocco dating back to the pre-protectorate era (Abouzeid 2012:5). Indeed, in the sixties and seventies, Paul Bowles translated Moroccan storytellers and authors, including Mohammed Choukri, Mohammed Mrabet, Ahmad Yacoubi, and Abdesalam Boulaich. Bowles concentrated most of his writings and translations on Morocco, publishing several literary works.

In his novel *The Sheltering Sky*, Bowles (1949:11-35) offers a degrading description of Morocco as a materialistic society where there are no traces of religion, and people are immersed in daily lives looking for money and the indulgence of their orgies marred with filth, dirtiness, and prostitution. Such a representation has oriented the travelers' regard towards Morocco, as witnessed by the journalist Sian Cain:

I backpacked around Morocco a few years ago, even visiting the Paul Bowles museum in Tangier; and without fail, Bowles's book whisks up memories of the dry heat, the acrid scent of hot urine on brick, constant sunburn, and the emptiness of an uneasy gut lined only with Coca-Cola. I remember how much I loved its foreignness, and also how aware I was of how foreign I was in it. All the Arabic and hijabs I had in my possession did not shadow my constant awareness that to everyone I met, I was yet another bumbling tourist. (Cain 2015).

Other Moroccan authors have also been translated into English, including Taher Ben Jelloun, Driss Chreibi, Leila Abu Zeid, Bensalem Hemmish, Moahmmmed Berrada, Abdelhay

Elmouden, Abdellatif Laabi, Abdellah Tia, Abdelilah Hamdouchi, Ahmed Bouanani, Abdelkebir Khatibi, Rachida Madani, and Malika Moustadraf. Their works involve different genres: fiction, short fiction, poetry, and memoir. Still, Leila Lalami remains the only Moroccan female novelist writing in English to have been internationally acclaimed. Her works have been nominated for numerous awards, including the Hurston-Wright Legacy Award and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

3. Methodology

The imagological analysis that is employed in this research is inspired by Joep Leerson's method of deconstructing endotypes, stereotypical characterizations of a particular nation. They involve three types of images: auto-images, hetero-images, and meta-images (Leerson 2016:16). As a sub-branch of comparative literature, imagology studies the distribution of autotypes in literature. Its history can be traced to the first attempts to address the representation of foreigners in literature, as has been the case with Maricus-Francois Guyard, broadening its scope of consideration to that of xenophobia and national stereotyping (2016:29).

The suggested analysis model is based on the assessment of three elements: intext, context, and text. The intertextualization process typologizes the image by tracing its occurrences and grouping; contextualization highlights the image's political, historical, and social environment; and, finally, textualization identifies the image, deconstructing its discursive manifestations and essentialism. A synthetic approach is undertaken to identify the prevailing images dominating the novel under study, considering the character's worldviews, profiling, and value system, with a focus on the representation of Morocco.

4. Findings

4.1. The Representation of Women

The novel offers insight into female perspectives through a number of characters mentioned in the text. The protagonist, whom the author chooses, is a strong character, an uneducated woman in her forties named Zahra, who suddenly finds herself driven out of the marital house and has to reconstruct her life anew, depending on herself with no real preparations for the requirements of a modern life after colonialism. She is self-determinedly attached to her own independence and refuses to adapt to the new life her husband chooses to lead. She is satisfied with her traditional perception of life and refuses to give up her past habits of solidarity and modesty, or to change her treatment of her maid, despite her husband's desire to adapt her conduct to his new professional position as a government official.

The author highlights the idea that the value of a married woman, as seen by her in-laws, depends to a large extent on her fertility. The prospects for a sterile married woman to keep her family or remain the only wife are limited due to the involvement of the family in the couple's marital status, bearing in mind the historical context surrounding that outlook. Zahra is aware that a woman needs to be empowered to escape the harsh treatment she endured by her in-laws. The novel reveals chiefly other roles the Moroccan woman played during the period of the French Protectorate against the image propagated in the West about Moroccan women who are depicted as enigmatic and relegated to sexual objects:

Across the narrative of this film, as well as in other similar movies such David Butler's **Road to Morocco** (1942) and Bruce Humberstone's **The Desert Song** (1953), the Moroccan woman remains an enigmatic figure whose secrets cannot be deciphered. The visual representation of veiled women as objects of desire, for instance, operates against its grain". (Oudadene 2013)

Equally important, Moroccan women participated actively in the resistance movement and used to conduct certain operations and raise funds, as shown through the experiences of

Zahra, Roukia, and Safia. Zahra also contributes to financing the resistance movement, sacrificing her olive trees and jewelry for independence.

We find another image of Moroccan women portrayed as having a strong relationship with their husbands, like Roukia and Zahra's sister, which is based on mutual understanding. Still another description of Rahma depicted her as an intruder and a hard person to deal with. Unlike other women, Safia is the only female character described as unfaithful, paying no heed to the trust, but instead taking advantage of the donations. She is fascinated by the new lifestyle and fashion but lacks the knowledge to dress properly, which disfigures her.

4.2. The Representation of Men

Despite the existence of some traitors loyal to the French occupation, the majority of Moroccan men mentioned in the novel are portrayed as freedom fighters engaged deeply in the resistance movement to liberate Morocco from colonization who sacrifice their lives and endure prison and other sufferings like Si Mohammed, Zahra's husband, Faqih, Haj Ali, Moha ou Alla, Allal, and others. Among these characters, only Hajj Ali rejects the new change. After working as a *caïd* (local governor), he returns to his workshop to continue working as a welder. Another character, Faqih, is portrayed to have embraced the new economic situation and is happy to be appointed as a *caïd*, maintaining his relationship with his wife, Roukia. He is determined to move to Azilal to enjoy its mountainous environment, even though it means turning down his appointment in Kenitra. However, Zahra's husband cannot reconcile his life before Independence with his new situation. Consequently, he turns his back on his past and leads a new life. He is no longer working as a French language teacher, and he is offered a higher government job with a residence, cheating on his wife with his secretary in the hotel. Still, the sheikh is immersed in his spiritual world, uninvolved in what is happening outside his shrine, and leads a simple life devoted entirely to his spirituality.

4.3. The Representation of Moroccan Faith

There are two religions mentioned in the novel: Islam and Judaism. Jewish people in the novel are associated with trade, wine, astrology, magic, collaboration with the French colonizer, and immigration. We see Jewish women seeking astrological services to learn about their fortunes. However, religion seems to be an integral part of some characters, like Zahra and Roukia, who are practicing Muslims. It is present in the characters' speeches and daily conversations, inspiring them to carry out the missions assigned to them by the resistance movement. Likewise, Moroccans are depicted to have a strong attachment to shrines and mausoleums, believing in the mystical power of these places to fulfill their wishes. Also highlighted is a religious tradition in which children are encouraged to fast one day during the holy month of Ramadan.

Essentially, Islamic mysticism dominates the novel. On a number of occasions, Zahra pays visits to the sheikh, who is devoted to worshipping God and offering advice to those who knock at his door. The sheikh treats his visitors kindly. He leads a simple life, meeting his visitors at a shrine, mainly women. There is no indication that he takes advantage of the situation or exploits his female visitors in any way; instead, he is ready to listen to and guide them on God's path to purify their souls from sin and lead happy lives uninvolved in politics or the resistance movement. Compared to preachers, he is exalted to a higher position due to his righteousness, as indicated below:

The sheikh is a fountain of goodness in an age when even **preachers are adulterers and drunkards**. (Abouzeid 1989:11).

4.4. The Representation of French Colonization

Zahra's patriotic awareness comes immediately after the French army killed a large number of Moroccan civilians. Earlier, she was obsessed with her own personal life. The incident served as a prompt to shift attention from nourishing one's desires to collaborating to drive the French occupants out of the country. Historically, more than 2000 Moroccans were killed on April 7th, 1947, in Casablanca following the incident of the breaking down of an African French mercenary into a Moroccan house looking for sexual pleasure, resulting in his torture and the amputation of his reproductive system by Moroccan men over there. After that, the French army retaliated by killing a large number of innocent civilians mercilessly (El-Basri 2013). The author pays tribute to Moroccan civilians who were killed by the French army in a horrible genocide that can be classified among crimes against humanity according to Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

We also find a further dreadful scene in the novel in which a Moroccan woman is beaten and threatened with torture in the police station, leaving her children crying behind. The woman is forced to go outside her house unveiled while her children are crying. A French agent smacks her to let out information about her husband, who is hiding from French authorities. Nevertheless, the author shows another facet of French agents. Walter, a German national working as a prison guard, is portrayed as sympathetic to the Moroccan people. He is married to a Moroccan woman and has two daughters with her. He remained in Morocco after Independence. Based on the way Zahra is treated while looking for a job at the end of the novel, the French Cultural Center is illustrated to be highly professional, where Zahra's job application is welcomed, unlike the factory's receptionist's harsh treatment.

4.5. The Representation of Parapsychological Practices

In addition to mysticism, the text also mentions parapsychological practices, such as astrology and magic, which the author proves are illusions and a means to earn a living by taking advantage of people's naiveté. Both Muslims and Jews in the novel under study resort to the services of fortune-tellers in search of the truth and, by extension, a better life. It is clearly seen that fortune-tellers have a strong spiritual hold over people who believe in their parapsychological abilities to read the future and people's destinies. At the beginning of her crisis, Zahra wonders whether she is under the influence of black magic or evil eye when she is engaged in a conversation with the sheikh, who evokes the Prophet's incident, which leaves her confused and unable to reach a decision, advising her to be careful with such matters. Although convinced that magic exists, the sheikh does not know whether Zahra is under its influence and leaves the matter to God. On another occasion, Zahra's family is manipulated by a crook who steals their jewelry and convinces them to give him all their gold jewelry, believing he will double their money.

To put a fortune-teller to the test, Zahra asks her about the prospects of her relationship with her husband, which turns out to be misleading. The place is described as darkened, stinking, with an unpleasant smell, and teeming with women. The fortune-teller is typically dressed in green and black, which symbolizes natural energy and power, giving the impression that they possess divine wisdom and deflecting skeptical attention from their claims. Following this visit, Zahra is divorced, which makes her lose trust in astrology. However, the author gives credence to her dream, foreshadowing that her relationship with her husband has come to an end.

5. Discussion

The focus in *The Year of the Elephant* is on a number of elements: colonization, the status of women in society, mysticism, human relationships, and sorcery. The novel stresses the crimes and massacres committed by the French army in Morocco against the civil population,

paying tribute to all the Moroccans killed during the period of colonization and prodding the reader to sympathize with the Moroccan people. Despite the might of the French army, Moroccan freedom fighters managed to drive this army out of Morocco. This patriotic zeal inspires admiration for the Moroccan people as firm, valiant, honorable, and dignified, liberating themselves from their occupiers without resorting to any foreign power. On the contrary, the reader may be disappointed to see the changes that have taken place after Independence, in which these people, who were once united and lived in harmony with each other, took different paths and became immersed in a new life, treating each other ungratefully, with a few exceptions.

There is also the idea of negligence of female contribution to the Independence movement by rewarding only men with high government posts with no regard to women who were left to cope with their destinies, bearing in mind that the novel was published in 1980, after the creation of the High Commission for Resistance Veterans and Members of the Liberation Army, which was created on June 15th, 1973, mandated mainly with the roles to represent and defend the interests of resistance veterans, members of the liberation army, and their families with no distinction between men and women. These efforts contradict the image conveyed in the text, thereby affecting perceptions of the Moroccan State.

Given the victimization of women due to the patriarchal framework, which limits women's rights and reduces their roles, the novel underlines the need to change the family code to grant more rights to divorced women who find themselves left with no means of subsistence while growing old. Add to that the way the woman is treated by her in-laws and society's regard for her divorce. This depressing situation has been reviewed by current family law, which takes into account the wife's efforts and contribution to the growth of the family fortune (Article 49 of the Family Code). Based on the experience of the protagonist, we can say that the novel has succeeded in projecting an image for the Moroccan woman who is self-reliant, living up to her convictions, acting with dignity and, preserving her self-esteem while rebelling against the traditional perception of the woman's role in society to give birth to children and submit to her husband's mercy, risking being left without a source of revenue.

Besides, the practice of sorcery prevails in the text, in which fortune tellers are illustrated to deceive people and steal their money with no real effect or magical power, exploiting people's belief in superstition. Indeed, the association of Jewish people in general with magic and Jewish women with the practice of fortunetelling narrows the scope of influence of the Jewish community, which can fall under anti-Semitism. The novel puts all the Jews in one box, which demonizes them. Nevertheless, the characters are aware of the fact that the Europeans are dissimilar, distinguishing between those who are friendly and supportive of their cause and those who are exploitative.

Amid the confusing environment, there appears to be a Sufi man in the novel who leads his visitors to spiritual sublimation. Apparently, the novel exalts the qualities and status of Sufis within society, devoted to the worship of God and helping people. In comparison to the preachers who are labeled as drunkards and adulterers, this pious man does not take advantage of the situation or harass any of the women who come for consultation. His openness, acceptance of people as they are, tolerance, and empathy make him a prominent figure within society. This approach to religion has important implications for people's perceptions of Sufis and their shrines, which have been raised to the status of saints. Accordingly, there is a strong popular attachment to saint shrines and their power to heal, deflect evil, and have a blessed life. These results provide further support for the development of the Moroccan brand of Sufism, expanding its sphere of influence internationally.

What is flagrantly noticed in the translation of the whole text is the insertion of the translator's personal conviction on three main occasions: the first one is related to an Algerian man reporting the arrest of the protagonist's husband:

My mind adjusted slowly, as it had on that long-ago day when I opened the door to a stranger who said with an Algerian accent, "They have locked him up". (Abouzeid 1989: 2)

The second one is related to criticism of the family code, as shown below:

That shows the extent of the law's regard for women. Throw them out on the streets with a hundred days of expenses. (Abouzeid 1989:2)

The third one is related to the insertion of a Jewish name, **Pinhas**, instead of using the object pronoun "him" to accentuate the negative representation of Jewish people in the novel:

يجب أن نضرب العملاء. أندرتاه ومازال يبيع السجائر. (Abouzeid 2011: 60)

It was our duty to attack the agents of colonialism. We had warned **Pinhas**, yet he continued to sell cigarettes. (Abouzeid 1989, 36)

Based on these two remarks, we can say that the translator has failed to faithfully convey the text without any ideological intervention, which calls into mind the need for an ethical approach to literary translation to remain faithful to the source text as much as possible for the sake of credibility. Thus, the translator should abstain from expressing his opinion and feelings and exploit the source text for his own agenda.

6. Conclusion

The Year of the Elephant traces the actions of Morocco's resistance movement towards Independence and the changes that have followed. Regarding the representation of Moroccan society, the author provides a panoramic view of the resistance movement in which women played a primordial role, depicting the crimes the French army committed against the Moroccan people. The focus is also set on religious and parapsychological practices by both Muslims and Jews in Morocco, in which Sufism is honored to exemplify the best form of worshipping God. Also advocated are women's status in society and the need for a strong will to live independently with dignity, transgressing traditional bounds.

The discussion of Morocco's representation in the novel shows that literature can be deployed to serve Moroccan cultural diplomacy abroad, provided it reflects a positive image of the source culture that draws attention to its intriguing aspects. The instrumentalization of literature, in general, and literary translation, in particular, by Moroccan cultural diplomacy can serve to correct Morocco's image abroad.

References:

- Abouzeid, Leila. 1989. *The Year of the Elephant*. Translated by Barbara Parmenter. Austin: University of Texas.
- Abuzeid, Leila. 2012. *Return to Childhood*. Casablanca: Company of Publication and Distribution Almadaris.
- Abuzeid, Leila. 2011. *The Year of the Elephant*. Casablanca: Arab Cultural Center.
- Baker, Mona. 2006. *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
- Bowles, Paul. 1949. *The Sheltering Sky*. New York: New Directions
- Cain, Sian. 2015. "The Sheltering Sky by Paul Bowles – a cautionary tale for tourists". *Guardian*, online: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2015/aug/28/the-sheltering-sky-by-paul-bowles-a-cautionary-tale-for-tourists> [2023, December 18].
- Cumming, C. Milton. 2003. "Cultural Diplomacy and United States Government". *Cultural Policy*, online: www.culturalpolicy.org [2023, January 23].
- Cummings, Milton. 2009. *Cultural Diplomacy and the United State Government: a survey*. Washington: Americans for the Arts.
- Dasii, Elmahjoub. 2017. "The Rise of African Students in Morocco". *Febrayer*, online: <https://www.febrayer.com/508842.html> [2023, March 13].

- Dizard, Jr., Wilson. 2001. *Digital Diplomacy: US Foreign Policy in the Information Age*. Praeger: New York.
- Eagleton, Terry. 2002. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- El-Basri, Hasan. 2013. "The Senegalese Strike". *Maghress*, online:
<https://www.maghress.com/almassae/178829>[2023, April 27].
- Hartig, Falk. 2016. "How China Understands Public Diplomacy: The Importance of National Image for National Interests". *International Studies Review*. 18 (4):655–680.
- Kenbib, Mohamed, and Aydon, Ahmed. 2015. *Moroccan Cultural Diplomacy: Suggestion of an Innovative Model*. Rabat: Royal Institute of Strategic Studies.
- Leonard, Mark et al. 2002. *Public Diplomacy*. London: Foreign Policy Center.
- Nye, Joseph S. 2004. *Soft Power – The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Oudadene, Hassane. 2013. "The Image of the Moroccan Women in Joosef Von Sterberg's Morocco (1930)". *Journal of Culture, Society and Development*. 1:78-93.
- Ping, Li. 2014. "Literary Translation, Gender and Cultural Diplomacy—Interviewing with Louise Von Flowton". *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Translation Studies*. 1 (3):59-64.
- Perrigo, Billy. 2017. "How the U.S. Used Jazz as a Cold War Secret Weapon". *Time*, online:
<http://time.com/5056351/cold-war-jazz-ambassadors/> [2024, April 20].
- Pratap, Bhanu. 2005. "India's Cultural Diplomacy: Present Dynamics, Challenges and Future Prospects". *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies*. 1 (9):55-65.
- Ritter, Rüdiger. 2013. "Broadcasting Jazz into the Eastern Bloc—Cold War Weapon or Cultural Exchange? The Example of Willis Conover". *Jazz Perspectives*. 7 (2): 111–131.
- Saunders, Frances Stonor. 2009. *Who Paid the Piper? CIA and Cultural Cold War*. Translated by Talat Achaib. Cairo: National Translation Center.
- Schneider, Cynthia P. 2005. "Culture Communicates: US Diplomacy That Works." In *The New Public Diplomacy*. Jan Melissen (Ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 147–168.
- Wang, Yiwei. 2008. "Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Chinese Soft Power". *The ANNALS, AAPSS*. 616 (1):257-273.

Note on the author:

Abdelmajid MADANI holds an MA in Translation from the King Fahd School of Translation, Morocco. He is presently awaiting the defense of his PhD dissertation at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Mohammed V University. His scholarly interests span literary translation, literature, intercultural communication, and cultural diplomacy. In addition to his academic work, he is a certified translator with more than a decade of professional experience, having been active in the field since 2012.