Translator as Interpreter:

Flipping of Geopolitical Power Relations in *Homebody/Kabul*

By: Jessica Ng

Within contemporary society, the role of the translator and the interpreter has become increasingly blurred; often than not, the terms "translation" and "interpretation" used almost interchangeably despite the fact that interpretation and translation are two different professions with somewhat different skill sets. Translators, "change written text into another language in written form or, may read the text and translate it into another language orally" (Jones and Boyle, 110), while interpreters, on the other hand, "listen to a spoken language and change it into spoke form of another language" (110). Although at first glance the role of the interpreter and that of the translator seem very similar to one another, the task of the translator is exceedingly more complex than that of an interpreter. As the translator has to deal with an actual written source it becomes much easier to hold the translator accountable to his translation than that of an interpreter to his interpretation. The translator thus, is much more limited, as the translator is expected to remain "faithful" to the original written source text. The interpreter, on the other hand, is allowed more "freedom" than that of the translator, as the interpreter has no written source text to answer to. Despite these differences, the roles of translator and interpreter continue be to synthesized into one combined role of translator-interpreter, where often than not the skills of the interpreter are highlighted and showcased while, that of the translator are left unmentioned. This stereotypical view of the translator-interpreter has become a common literary motif, especially that are centered on an international space, to highlight and comment on themes of translation, mistranslation, and misunderstanding.

These themes of translation, mistranslating and misunderstanding are themes that are explored within Tony Kushner's play, *Homebody/Kabul*. Kushner's play is divided into two parts. The first part centers on the Homebody, a middle aged, middle class British housewife, who embarks on an imaginary journey to Kabul through her reading of an outdated guide book on Afghanistan. This eventually leads to her physical departure from her home in London to the

dangerous reality of Afghanistan. The second part of Kushner's play, deals with the aftermath of the Homebody's departure as her family travels to Kabul in search of her. Kushner's characters within these two sections of the play encounter a number of situations in which translation is needed for them to gain understanding but is not given; instead they are given half-truths and lies that causes dangerous misunderstandings. Kushner's usage of translation, mistranslation, and misinterpretations both construct and deconstructs the traditionally accepted geopolitical power dynamic between East/West relations.

The initial reception of the revised version of Kushner's play when it first premiered at the New York Theatre Workshop in December 2001, two months after the September 11 terrorist attacks, was explosive, it quickly became one of the most controversial and talked about the off-Broadway plays in New York. A *Newsweek* article published in mid-December stated that "while *Homebody* is clearly anti-Taliban, Kushner allow his most radical creations to speak their minds in a way that may feel uncomfortable now that any criticism of America is deemed unpatriotic" (cited in Juntunen, 2006, 177). What was it exactly that was so unpatriotic about *Homebody/Kabul*? After all Kushner's play, at its very bases, is simply a play about a British woman who struggles to find her place within world outside her protected sphere of the West, and about the struggles her family endure in the aftermath of her disappearance. Jacob Juntunen argues that one of the reasons why Kushner's play was viewed as being radical and controversial was that it became an "important site of resistance to the Bush Administration [War on Terror] hegemony [as] it allow […] people to come together nightly and experience an alternative view" (Juntunen, 181) of the Middle East. Although this is a perfectly acceptable explanation to why Kushner play was viewed as being controversial, it does not however, explain why this play continues, even now, to resonate with Western audiences. A possible explanation for this can be found in Kushner's own views regarding his place. He states in an interview that one of the reason he chose to set his play in Afghanistan was because for him, Afghanistan "was a place in which he found that [many] of the things that he thought [and accepted] to be true was challenged" (Kushner, *Charlie Ross Interview*, 2001) in a useful way. For Kushner, Afghanistan became a very important place not only because of its significance in global politics but also

because it became a place that represented change. As he states in his afterword, his goal with this play, as with all his other plays, was that "it might prove generative of thought, contemplation, [and] discussion" (Kushner, 142). In other words, Kushner hoped that *Homebody/Kabul* would open up new forms of discourse, especially those regarding East/West relations. A way in which Kushner accomplishes this is through his usages of language, translation and mistranslation.

The usage of language plays a significant thematic role within the structure and content of Kushner's dramatic text. This importance of language and its usages is emphasised even before the beginning of the play. Kushner's title alone, *Homebody/Kabul*, indicated to the readers the importance the role of languages both the play's structure and its contents. In the title, there is a clear division between the Homebody's monologue and that of Kabul. The reader is made aware of this division by the striking presence of a slash in between "Homebody" and "Kabul". This division between the Homebody and Kabul has two implications; the first is that it indicates to the reader that the play is structurally divided into two sections: one that focus solely on the Homebody while the other is centered around on the city of Kabul. Kushner, when he first began writing this play, had only intended it be a monologue however, he felt that this monologue was only the beginning of the tale that he wanted to tell (Kushner, *Charlie Ross Interview*, 2001); a tale that, according to Kushner that focuses not only on the power relationship between East and West but also about the human experience. He later mentions in another interview with Charlie Ross, that he believes that Homebody/Kabul will never truly be finished; he does not believe that he would be able to ever find "the perfect absolute finish" (Kushner, *Charlie Ross Interview*, 2004) for this play. While Kushner does not give an actual reason for why this is so, it can be speculated that this is because the relationship between Afghanistan and the West has not yet and most likely will never be fully resolved. The second function of the separation of "Homebody" and "Kabul" in the play's title is to foreshadow the events of Kushner's play to its reader and audience. It signifies to the reader and audience that that the Homebody is ultimately unable to find the connection to Afghanistan that she desperately desires and longs for. Instead, she becomes even more alienated from Kabul than she was when she began her imagined journey

into the Middle East; this indicates to the audience of Kushner's unspoken message regarding how the West can never fully reach the foreign East. From these two readings of Kushner' title, the reader is made aware not only the structure and setting of the play but also a peek into one of the central themes embedded within the play's content.

The structural division of Kushner's play into the two separate sections of "Homebody" and "Kabul" is useful in illustrating the process of which this ideology of western power dominance is re-affirmed, then challenged and eventually shattered. It is within Homebody's monologue that the themes of translation-interpretation and mistranslation is first introduced to the reader and the audience with the Homebody eventually taking on the role of interpreter-translator, as she guides the audience through her imagined journey to Kabul. The Homebody, in her monologue, begins her imagined journey of Afghanistan through the act of reading. The city of Kabul and the Afghan culture is translated into the Homebody's own interpretation of Middle East through the medium of Nancy Hatch Dupree's 1965 (12) guidebook. It is here that Dupree becomes the first translator-interpreter that the reader encounters in Kushner`s play. The guidebook provides the Homebody an escape into a foreign world away from the life she has in the West. Homebody has never once, prior to her reading of the guidebook, made an attempt to break into out of the established western context and into the foreign. She states that she "live with the world's utter indifference (12), suggesting that the Homebody is aware that in her lack of interaction with the outside world, that is outside the western context, the world in turn has become indifferent to her presence. That it is only through her reading of books, such as Dupree's guidebook, that the Homebody is able to come into contact with the foreign; "my borders have only ever been broached by books […] sad to say […] only ever been broached by books" (13). The guidebook is significant for the Homebody not because it is her sole means of interaction with the foreign world outsider her Western reality but also because becomes the background context in which the Homebody conducts her translations and interpretations of Afghanistan and the Middle East.

In addition to Dupree being the first translator-interpreter that the reader encounters she also becomes the first "bad" translator that is present in Kushner's play. According to Walter

Benjamin, "any translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but information – hence, something inessential […] this is the hallmark of bad translations" (Benjamin, 69); this is essentially what Dupree's guidebook does, it provides inessential information that is information that is no longer relevant. As the Homebody reveals to her audience, the guidebook the she bases her interpretation and translation of Kabul and Afghanistan is "outdated". She states, "I am reading from an outdated guidebook about the city of Kabul […] a guidebook to a city which as we all know, has…undergone change" (Kushner, 9). The Homebody thus, allows herself to be consciously exposed and immersed in a flawed cultural translation of Kabul. She states,

> My reading, my research is moth-like. Impassioned, fluttery, doomed […] I invariably seek out not the source but all that which was dropped by the wayside on the way to the source, outdated guidebooks […]old magazines, hysterical political treatises written by an advocate of some long-since defeated or abandoned or transmuted cause; and I find these irrelevant and irresistible, ghostly, dreamy, the knowing what *was* known before the more that has since become known (Kushner, 9-10).

The Homebody is does not actively look towards the "source" which has been commonly accepted as being accurate but is rather looks for and is attracted to "all that was dropped by the wayside on the way to the source" (9). This suggests that the Homebody is somewhat critical in what is has become accepted as the "truth" in the eyes of the Western society. Rather than looking towards official "sources" about Kabul, the Homebody turns her attention to the documents that have been rejected by the West as being "unreliable" and outdated. In focusing on these sources that have "fallen by the wayside" the Homebody is given a greater sense of freedom and space to shape her own interpretations of Afghanistan and the Middle East.

That is not to say that the Homebody is successful in separating herself from the traditionally accepted Western view of Afghanistan. Despite her attempts to create a different kind of interpretation of the Middle East, the Homebody is still a part of western society. Since she originates from the West, the Homebody naturally has unconsciously internalized certain western ideological views. An example of this is seen in the way in which the Homebody stereotypically views the treatment of women in the Middle East. She states, "In Afghanistan

today I would be shrouded entirely in a *burqa*, I should be subject to *hejab*, I should live in terror of the *sharia hudud* or more probably dead, unregenerate chatterer that I am" (Kushner, 23). In this scene the Homebody makes a number of Western assumptions regarding the treatment of women in Afghanistan. While it is true that if the Homebody, as a woman, were to lived in Afghanistan she would be expected to conform to the social norms of the society there, this however can be said of any other cultures as well. That if a person were to locate to an entirely different culture than their original home culture, they too would have to conform to the present social norms in the foreign culture that they immigrate to. In this scene, the Homebody while acknowledging that she would have to conform to the *burqa* and the *hejab*, neglects to inform the audience of the religious significance of this custom and its role within the Afghan culture. The Homebody does not make any attempts to bridge the distance between East and West in regards to cultural differences, rather she choice to simply choose to highlight the negative aspects of this religious practice mention only the punishment that she surely would receive if she fails to conform to these social expectations. The Homebody thus, re-enforces the Western stereotypical perception of this religious practice as another form of Middle Eastern feminine oppression, which in turn re-enforces the notion of the West as being the superior power, where females are "freely" given freedom and are not repressed. While, at the same time enforces the idea that the Middle East is still considered to be "backwards" in its practices, where oppression of women and public harsh punishment occurs openly with no one there to stop them.

In a sense, one can make the argument that the Homebody's interpretation of Kabul and Afghanistan is performed through an Orientalist lens. Edward Said defines the Orientalist as someone, "[who] makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for the West" (Said, 20-21) to see. Following this definition, the reader can interpret the Homebody as taking on the role of the Orientalist, in the sense that she is making Kabul, and to a certain extent Afghanistan, speak for her in a way that continues to place the West in its position as the Superior power. She accomplishes this by framing her assumptions as an opposition to the accepted norms in the Wes; Said states, "the Orient has helped define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, [and] experience" (1-2). This is what the Homebody does in

this scene where she places herself, as a representation of the West, in opposition to the Middle East and its cultural customs.

Although this interpretation that the Homebody makes regarding the treatment of women in Afghanistan reinforces Western ideology of superiority it nevertheless still stems from her reading of her unreliable sources such as Dupree's guidebook. The Homebody's reliance on these unreliable sources fuels her own fragmented and flawed perspective and interpretations of Kabul and Afghan culture, which later on comes in conflict with the actual reality of Kabul. This fragmentation is evident in the Homebody's multiple narrations of different tales regarding Kabul and Afghanistan; each of these narratives ends up overlapping on top of one another. For example, the history Afghanistan that the Homebody reads out from her outdated guidebook is overlapped with her own narration of her imagined foreign experience in a Middle Eastern goods shop somewhere in London. The outdated guidebook in which the Homebody reads from is a mistranslation of the Afghan culture and history thus, her reading of this guidebook in turn causes her to continue to mistranslate the Afghan culture and eventually influences how she interprets her encounter with the Middle Eastern Merchant at the little oriental shop she visits. She describes the Afghan hat Merchant[1] as being all of the sudden,

> Very beautiful, not on account of regularity of features or smoothness of the skin, no, his skin is broken by webs of lines inscribed by hardships, siroccos and strife, battle scars, perhaps, well certainly the marks of some battle, some life unimaginably more difficult than my own (Kushner, 23).

The Homebody, in this scene follows Said's definition of Orient, he states that the Orient "since antiquity [is] a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, [and] remarkable experiences" (Said, 1). This is how the Homebody views the Kabul and Afghanistan, through this romantic, exotic lens; the audience sees this in her description of the Afghan hat Merchant where she romanticizes the foreign and the foreign experience. She describes the Merchant as being "very beautiful" to her; the Homebody's attraction to the "beauty" of the

[1]The Afghan merchant is referred to as the Afghan Hat merchant because the Homebody makes the assumption that the shop she visits is made up of Afghan refugees and she goes there to purchase these Middle Eastern style hats that she reasons to also be from Afghanistan.

merchant has nothing to do with physical attractiveness but rather it has to do with the experience of hardship and suffering that the Homebody imagines the merchant has gone through in order to have obtained the scares and injuries that he has. Here the Homebody is idealizing the foreign experiences that she has only experienced through her reading of the guidebook. Though on the surface, this can be viewed as the Homebody privileging the Middle East for undergoing all this hardship that the West has not face, we need to be reminded that at this moment she is only assuming that the merchant has gone through some kind of cruel suffering. That she has in fact not asked how these scares and the ruined hand[2] has come about. The Homebody in this scene thus, is imposing the orientialized ideal of romance and adventure onto the merchant and is ignoring the reality that is Kabul and Afghanistan. This once again gives the West power over the foreign East, as the Homebody, the representation of West, imposes her own ideals in her translation of the Merchant, she renders him voiceless as she dictates herself what he must have gone through.

The way in which the Homebody describes and interprets the Merchant and the story behind his injuries and scares are similar to how Said read's Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian woman. Said states, "she never spoke for herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history […] *he* spoke for and represented her" (Said, 6). The same can be seen in the Homebody's interpretation of the Afghan hat Merchant where she not only imposes her romanticizes vision of him but also of his life "story".

> I asked him to tell me what had happen to his hand. And he said:
> I was with the Mujahideen, and the Russians did this. I was with the Mujahideen, and an enemy faction of the Mujahideen did this. I was with the Russian, I was known to have assisted the Russians, I did informer's work for Babrak Karmal, my name is in the files if they haven't been destroyed, the names I gave are in the files, there are no more files, I stole bread for my starving family, I stole bread *from* a starving family, I profaned, betrayed, according to some stricture I erred and they chopped off the fingers of my hand. *Look, look at my country, look at my Kabul, my city, what is left of my city? The streets are as bare as trhe mountains now, the building are as ragged as the mountains and as bare and empty of life, there is no life here only fear, we do not live in the buildings now, we live in terror in the cellars in the caves in the mountains, only God can save us now,*

[2] The one injury that seems to have caught the Homebody's attention the most.

> *only order can save us now, only God's Law harsh and strictly administered can save us now, only the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice can save us now, only terror can save us from ruin, only neverending war, save us from terror and neverending war, save my wife they are stoning my wife, they are chasing her with sticks, save my wife save my daughter from punishment by God, save us from God, from war, from exile, from oil exploration, from no oil exploration, from the West, from the children with rifles, carrying stones, only children with rifles carrying can save us now.* You will never understand. It is hard, it is hard work to get into the U.K. I am happy here in the U.K. I am terrified I will be made to leave the U.K. I cannot wait to leave the U.K. I despise the U.K. I voted for John Major. I voted for Tony Blair. I did not, I cannot vote, I do not believe in voting, the people who ruined my hand were right to do so, they were wrong to do so, my hand is most certainly ruined, *you will never understand,* why are you buying so many hats? (Kushner, 23-24).

There are a number of different things that happens within this passage. First and foremost, the Homebody, in this scene, takes her romanticize image of the Afghan Merchant and expanded it to a full narrative to support her original romantic view thus, once again imposing her own ideals onto the Orient figure. Similar to Said's description of Flaubert's Egyptian encounter, the Homebody speaks for the Merchant, making him voiceless and become a representation of idealized vision of an Afghan man. This again, can be viewed as the West imposing itself and its views on to the East, which re-enforces the West's position of superiority over the East as it is the West who controls what is being said and seen of the East.

The other significant aspect of this scene is that it is a fractured retelling of Afghanistan's violent and complex history. Within the Homebody's narrative of the Afghan hat Merchant's back story is several unfinished narratives, regarding not only what could have possibly contributed to explain why and how the Merchant lost his hand but also different narratives of his experience in the West. These different overlapping narratives that the Homebody tells can be interpreted as a result of her own fractured knowledge of the Middle East. She states, "I know nothing of this hand, its history, of course, nothing. I did know, well I have learnt since through research that Kabul, which is the ancient capital of Afghanistan, where once the summer pavilion…"20). This quote illustrates to the reader the Homebody's lack of knowledge of the hat Merchant personal history; what history she does know pertaining to Afghanistan is what

Benjamin calls “inessential” knowledge (69), information that has no relevance. Since she does not have any complete reliable source to turn to, the only thing that the Homebody is able to do is to take what little she knows and understand of Afghanistan and its history and using these to construct her narrative. The Homebody’s fragmented and contradictory narrative is thus, a reflection of her own fragmented and incomplete knowledge of Afghanistan, in which she uses to creates a senses-for-sense translation-interpretation of the Middle East rather than a word-for-word translation-interpretation. A direct indicator of the Homebody’s lack of understanding and knowledge can be seen in the repetition of the line “You will never understand” (24). This line in the Homebody’s constructed narrative appears twice. The first time at the end of her narration of the Merchant’s supposed experiences in the Middle East, the second at the end of her narration of his imagined experience in the West. The appearance of this statement at the end of constructive narratives suggests to the reader that unconsciously the Homebody knows that she will never understand the experience of the Merchant whether it is in the Middle East or in the West. This is due to the fact that the Homebody is a Westerner and not a foreigner from the East hence; she has never endured any type of hardship or violence that the Merchant could have experience. Nor has she ever physically travelled she thus, has never had to go through the experience of being displace or lost as she imagined that the Merchant would have felt after he had immigrated to the West. This scene therefore, can be read by the audience as both a re-affirming of Western superiority, in that the Homebody, as a representation of the West, imposes her ideals on to the East via the hat Merchant. As well as the beginning point of the deconstruction of this ideology of Western superiority, where in this fabricated narration, there is a voice that strongly states that the Homebody and thus, the West will never understand the Middle East.

The deconstruction of this ideology of Western superiority continues in the latter half of Kushner’s play. In this second part, the audience is taken from the safety of London city and is dropped into the violent reality of Kabul, Afghanistan. The audience, along with the Homebody’s family, her husband and her daughter Priscilla, is told that the Homebody has left the West and has travelled to Kabul where she ends up being killed. As the second half of

Kushner's play takes place in the East, naturally the dominance that the West possessed within the first part of Kushner's play is challenged and is given to the East. It is in Kabul that the Homebody, and the West, recognizes that her fractured knowledge of Afghanistan pales in comparison to the reality. It is here that the western orientalist view of the East is completely shattered, literally and metaphorically with the supposed dismemberment and disappearance of the Homebody. That not only has the Homebody lost her life in Kabul but has been torn apart by the violence of Kabul as seen in this scene,

> **Doctor Qari Shah:** The axillary facia of the right, ah, hemispherical eminence, um, mamma, um, *breast,* torn off either by force of a blow or as the corpus ios dragged. Her left eye having been enucleated and from dull force of the occiput (*He indicates the back of the skull*) sheared cleanly off…
> […]
> **Mullah Aftar Ali Durranni:** Yes just so. The lady, she have been torn apart to pieces. (32 – 33).

This scene can be interpreted as a metaphor for the shattering of this notion of Western superiority through the literal physical dismemberment of the Homebody herself. The Homebody, the established symbolic representation of the Western superiority in Kushner's play, is literally torn apart by the East thereby representing to the audience the symbolic deconstruction of Western authority and power. No longer does the West become the one who impose their views onto the oriental East, rather it is the East who ends up taking on the role of the imposer.
As the official, Mullah Aftar Ali Durranni states, "Kabul is not a city for Western tourist women, we do not want them" (35). This quote is not only aimed towards the Homebody as a Western woman, but as her representation of the West at a whole; that the East does not welcome the Homebody as a symbol the perceived Western authority.

What is interesting in the Kushner's play is that the West is feminized rather than the East, which comes to be associated with images of men such as Mullah Aftar Ali Durranni and the Afghan Hat Merchant. The West, in Kushner's play, is represented by two strong female figures, the Homebody and her daughter Priscilla. A possible explanation this feminization of the West is that it helps illustrate the dramatic flipping of these accepted traditional role within the power

relationship between East and West. As the Middle East is a very patriarchal in its customs and societal norms, Kushner's usage of women as the symbolic representation of Western superiority provides his audience with a strong metaphor that argues against the ideology of Western superiority over the East. Although the Homebody, as both a symbol and character, disappears from Kushner's play, she continues to play a significant role. She becomes the motivation for Priscilla, who replaces the Homebody as the symbol of the West, as she struggles to make sense of her mother's death and disappearance.

Priscilla, as Kushner's new representation of the West, strives to not only recover her mother's body but also symbolic attempts to re-establish the shattered ideology of Western superiority. She, unlike her father, does not accept that her mother is dead and will not accepted it as a fact until she physically sees her mother's body herself. She states, "The government! The government couldn't tell us if she was alive or dead. We still don't *know*" (39). Priscilla unable to accept what was told to her by Mullah Aftar Ali Durranni, goes out into Kabul against her father's wishes, similar to how the Homebody leaves the West without the approval or acknowledgement of her family. Once outside Pricilla attempts to conform to the social norms of the Middle East but ends up failing, eventually leading to her trying to re-establish her western authority.

> [*On a street in Kabul.*
> *Priscilla is in her burqa, trying to read the guidebook's small map through the burqa's grille, holding it close, changing angles so as to find the strongest light.*
> *A group of women passes by, all shrouded head to toe in burqas, whispering.*]
> **Priscilla:** Um, hullo, can you tell me where the Ladies Hospital is. Or the Red Crescent offices, or the U.N. Compound, it's all turned around somehow. I can't read any of the signs. Do you speak English?
> **Lady in Burqa:** [*In Dari*] Mah nah may donam cheezayk'shomaw may go ayd. Bah cheezban shomaw harf mayzanayd? (*I do not understand what you are saying. What language are you speaking?*)
> **Priscilla:** My Mother was…They say she was murdered.
> **Lady in Burqa:** Mother?
> [*Priscilla tosses off her Burqa. She's wearing the discman on her belt around her waist, the headphones in her ears.*]
> **Priscilla:** Yes! And I am lost. Is this building the – (43 – 44).

In this scene Priscilla attempts to appear like she is conforming to the social norms of Kabul but wearing the traditional Burqa however, as indicated by the stage actions she is only keeping up the appearance. Underneath her Burqa she is still wearing the discman and has headphones on; both of which are symbols of the West, the headphones that she has on also can be read as her not willing to understand the foreign culture that she now finds herself in, as she blocks her ears with a Western device. It is also in this scene that Priscilla and the audience is made conscious of their lack of linguistic understanding. This is the first time in the play in which translation is not provided to the characters or the audience; the first time that the audience and Priscilla is made painfully aware that they are being alienated from their surroundings. Priscilla is alienated by the Afghan culture around her while the audience is alienated by their limited understanding of the speech that is occurring on stage. According to Jennifer Lindsay, multilingualism in drama performances texts such as Kushner's play, can demonstrate the relationship between "languages of relative power and subordination" (Lindsay, 11). This is what occurs within Kushner's play, where English, the language of the West, becomes subordinated to the languages of the East. This is illustrated to the audience through Priscilla's lack of ability to both read the map and roads signs as well as in her inability to communicate with the Kabul woman she encounters. The alienation that the audience feels is different from Priscilla's alienation. Lindsay state,

> The multilingualism of the performers may not be shared at all by the audience; perhaps the audience as a whole understand only one, or even none of the languages of the performance […] Translation is then something that the performers might undertake for the audience […] Translation can be seen as a factor of inclusiveness or exclusiveness, namely a measure of the extent to which performers translate between themselves, or for the audience or for certain parts of the audience (Lindsay, 17).

As the translation of this scene, and many other multilingual scenes in Kushner's play, is left untranslated for the audience, who most likely would be composed of monolingual members, the audience who watch this scene becomes alienated from what occurs on stage and further places the audience in a venerable position where once again the West loses its power position. There is thus, a need for translation for both Priscilla and the audience in order for there to be some sort of re-establishment of Western power.

This is filled by the translator-interpreter figure of Khwaja, who after rescuing Priscilla takes on the role of her guide and translator-interpreter of Kabul. Khwaja become an important character, as he does not help Priscilla re-establish the Western power in the East but rather continues to embody the growing presence of Eastern superiority over the West. He is the one, who first initiates contact with Priscilla placing himself in the role of her translator-interpreter, as seen in the scene,

> **Priscilla:** You know the city?
> **Kwhaja:** Since 1993 I am a Kabuli. Before that Earl's Court, ducky. And before that, Kabul, where I was born. Am I to be your uncle or ought I to push off?
> [*Little pause.*]
> **Priscilla:** Five pound for the day.
> **Kwhaja:** As you wish.
> **Priscilla:** Ten pounds?
> **Kwhaja:** I will be the cheapest family you ever had.
> **[…]**
> **Kwhaja:** I will take you to the hospitals, then, where sepsis is pervasive. It would be wise to replace the burqa.
> [*She puts on the burqa.*]
> **Priscilla:** I'm…You're to be my uncle?
> [*Little Pause. He looks at her.*]
> **Kwhaja:** Five years ago in the fighting just three blocks away, a mortar shell and good-by dear gentle brother; estimable sister-in-law, nephews, beloved niece.
> **Priscilla:** Is that true?
> [*Kwhaja bows a little, neither affirming nor denying.*]
> **Kwhaja:** But see, she has returned to heartsick old Khwaja, as all my dreams foretold. (Kushner, 48 – 50)

In this scene, Kwhaja sets up the power dynamic between him and Priscilla where he becomes the one who holds the power and Priscilla becomes the one that subordinate and dependent on him. This is illustrated to the audience through the price negotiation that occurs within this scene, where Priscilla first offers a price for Kwhaja's services and while he does not reject her offer he is able to, without any effort, manipulates her so that she will pay him double the initial amount offered. Already here Kwhaja demonstrates to the audience the power that he holds over Priscilla, and it is continued to be illustrated through the rest of this scene. Especially in the last part,

where Kwhaja tells Priscilla about the incident in which he supposedly lost his brother and his brother's family; when Priscilla asks if this story is true Kwhaja neither confirms it as being true nor does he denies its authenticity. This illustrates again to the audience the lack of power that Priscilla has in Kabul, and emphasising that she is in need of the assistance of a native resident from the Middle East to even to be able to function and survive in Kabul.

The translator-interpreter role that Khwaja plays within the second half of Kushner's play is different from that of the Homebody's role as translator-interpreter in the first half the play. Khwaja for one is much more knowledgeable than the Homebody ever way about Kabul, as he is a native who has lived in Kabul for a long time. Khwaja is not only knowledgeable of the events and customs of Kabul but also is acknowledgeable of the West and its social customs, as it is revealed later in the play to Priscilla that he has immigrated to London for a short while before he immigrated back the Afghanistan (59). His translation-interpretations thus, is not fractured the same way that the Homebody's translation-interpretations of Afghanistan and Kabul was fractured. This however, does not mean that Khwaja's translations-interpretations are not flawed or fractured in their own way. Khwaja's translations-interpretations for Priscilla, and to a certain extent for the audience, are never completely reliable. In that, the audience never knows if what Khwaja is translating completely accurate or if he is simply using Priscilla's and the audience's lack of linguistic understanding to his advantage in order to manipulate Priscilla into doing what he want. This can be seen in the following scene, in which a man by the name of Zai Garshi comes to Priscilla claiming that the Homebody is converted to Islam and has re-married a man in Kabul,

> **Priscilla:** Okay, stop for a moment please. My mother would never, never…do anything of this, anything like this, this man is lying and you're lying and I'm being lied to.
> **Zai Garshi:** I am unfinished. In exchange that this man keep your mother as wife of his, he wish you to help remove now-wife of his who is crazy, first wife, she wish to go away, to London preferably. I arrange meeting of you with crazy first wife. You and this lady leave Afghanistan. Your mother, these have her wish.
> **Kwhaja:** The man you mother marries already has a wife, who has gone mad, as many women have in Kabul. Your mother will live in place of this other women, who will go to London.
> **Zai Garshi:** Precisely.

> **Kwhaja:** This man can longer live with his wife. Her powerful family agree to emigration, because all want her gone.
> **Zai Garshi:** This so-angry women, as you will see.
> **Kwhaja:** But divorce they oppose. (77-78).

Although in this scene, the translation that occurs is not from a different language but rather from broken English to proper English, the scene still depicts one the only proper translations-interpretation scenes in Kushner's play. Again what is illustrated to the audience is not really a word-for-word translation but more of a sense-for-sense translation or as Roman Jackobson calls an intralingual translation or rewording, which is defined as "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other sings in the same language" (Bassnett, 22). As seen in the passage above while, Kwhaja does translate what Zai Garshi essentially tells Priscilla, Kwhaja takes it upon himself to add some additional information in his translation-interpretation. Some of the additions that he makes are the line about the women's family opposing to her divorcing her husband, who the audience and Priscilla are told that her mother has remarried to. In this scene, Kwhaja not only translates this story for Priscilla but also actively participates in convincing her that this story is true. Here Kwhaja and Zai Garshi does what the Homebody did in her monologue, they render the Homebody voiceless and impose their own narrative onto her. This again demonstrating how the power relations between East and West have flipped; where the East becomes the one who has dominates while the West becomes subordinate to the East.

The role of the translator-interpreter has become increasingly popular as a literary motif. In Tony Kushner's play, *Homebody/Kabul*, this motif is used not only as a tool for demonstrating the ways in which mistranslation can occur but also in highlight the construction and deconstruction of the general accepted geopolitical power dynamic between the West and the Middle East, where the West has traditionally been viewed as the dominate world power. Kushner's play usages the role of the translator-interpreter to illustrate how these power roles can be flipped around, where the East becomes the more powerful power and the West becomes the subordinate power. Kushner using the structure and setting of his play demonstrate to Western audiences that it this power relation is relative to which cultural context the audience is in. If in a

Western context then the West become the accepted dominate power and the East the subordinate power and vice versa, in an Eastern context in which the East becomes the dominate power and the West becomes subordinate to the East.

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