

## TRANSLATING FOR CHILDREN IN THE ARAB WORLD: AN EXERCISE IN CHILD POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

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**ABSTRACT:** Translating under the Arab dictatorships is a perilous task, as censorship bodies control all means and forms of expression. This is particularly true for children's literature, which is a powerful tool of political socialisation. Al-Hajji's *Guide to Arab children's literature*, translated in the Arab world from 1950 to 1998, shows that no book that undermines the dominant ideology has ever been translated in this geographical context. However, if a book chosen for translation contains some elements that might be viewed as subversive, strategies are adopted that automatically annihilate any threat. This paper focuses on the Arabic translation of Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, published in Syria in 1991, to which elements have been added that were never envisaged by the original author.

**KEYWORDS:** Autocracy, Translation Policy, Manipulation Strategies, Political Socialisation

### 1. Introduction

Censorship and manipulation are common practices in democratic and totalitarian countries alike, to varying degrees. Indeed, critical discourse analysis has shown that no discourse is free of ideology, which, according to Fairclough (1989, p. 4), is "the prime means of manufacturing consent". For this author, the primary task of any power or authority is to bring the population over to its ideology, something that may be achieved either by peaceful means or by coercion. Children's literature, both original and translated, is a means of ruling by consent (i.e. of socialising young people in order to convince them to adhere to a political system or ideology), though it may arguably be considered coercive when children are forced to read certain books in schools and penalised if they do not, as is the case with textbooks. As Van Dijk (2008, p. 115) points out, textbooks are "the only books that are obligatory reading".

When it comes to translation, the representation of the ideology of the dominant power may be overt or covert. In translation policy, where it tends to be overt, it may take the form of a resistance to translation in general (in order to prevent novel ideas entering the system) or a prohibition upon the translation of particular books or genres. It is covert when a book is subjected to certain forms of ideological manipulation during the translation process in order to subtly change or mitigate the work's ideological impact.

After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the United States made sure that Iraqi children's textbooks were "purified" of any ideological influence from the previous regime as a way of curbing Sunni rebellion against the newly-established state.<sup>1</sup> As in most other Arab regimes, president Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath Party had used both children's

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<sup>1</sup> The Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party was the ruling party in Iraq from 1968 to 2003, when the USA and its allies invaded the country and overthrew the regime of Saddam Hussein, and it has also been in power in Syria since 1963. It advocates socialism and broad Arab unity to achieve progress and thwart imperialist plans.

literature and textbooks as a tool of propaganda (see, for instance, al-Hajji, 1990). In Tunisia, too, the picture of the now-deposed president Ben Ali used to feature in primary school textbooks, with a foreword that was often extracted from one of his speeches.

The present paper aims to study the sociology of translating for children in order to highlight how political regimes, and dictatorships in particular, impact the production and circulation of such cultural goods in the Arab world. I will survey translation policies under Arab dictatorships in broad terms, before focusing on Syria during the 1950-1998 period in order to examine the translation of Anna Sewell's (1991) *Black Beauty* (based on the 1987 simplified version by Swan) as a case in point. My choice of Syria is motivated by several factors. First, Syria is a good example of an Arab autocracy with a strong ideological affiliation to socialism and Arab nationalism. Second, it has a clear official policy for the translation of children's books stipulated in the 1973 Constitution (Chammas, 2004; Kanaan, 1999). Third, my own examination of a corpus of Arabic translations of children's literature in Syria has allowed me to conclude that this official translation policy is systematically enforced on the ground (Mdallel 2018, 2020).

Within the limits of this paper, I intend to use what Chesterman (2007) calls the "causal model" to analyse the factors determining translation policy, including the criteria imposed for the selection of books to be translated and the textual manipulation strategies adopted. Chesterman (2007, p. 176) argues that translation research can only provide "quasi-causal" explanations (i.e. the *probable* cause of a given translation choice or strategy), and indeed, all the interpretations that I provide in my analysis of translation policies and textual strategies should be understood in this light.

The quantitative and qualitative analyses are based on calculations given in al-Hajji's *Guide to Arab children's literature*, a three-volume bibliographical guide covering the 1950-1999 period (al-Hajji, 1990, 1995, 1999; Mdallel, 2018, 2020).

## 2. Translation in the Arab world

Elbadawi and Makdisi (2011, p. i) assert that "[d]espite notable socio-economic development in the Arab region, a deficit in democracy and political rights has continued to prevail". At the political level, all the countries included in this list of Arab states<sup>2</sup> were run (at least until the so-called "Arab Spring") by monarchs with absolute powers and presidents with monarch-like absolute powers. The Polity IV index, a scale of democracy which rates countries from -10 (strongly autocratic) to 10 (strongly democratic), ranks the countries of the Arab world lowest for the 1960-2002 period (Marshall, Gurr and Jagers, 2017). As Elbadawi, Makdisi and Milante (2011, p. 43) point out, the average Arab country entered the 1960s with a polity score of -5.3, which is below that of the average East Asian (-1.9) and Sub-Saharan African (-4.1) states. Freedom of expression in the Arab world was

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<sup>2</sup> The Arab world comprises 22 countries, which are: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros Island, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. All these countries have Arabic as their official language, while the populations speak various forms of Arabic vernaculars.

also one of the lowest worldwide in the 1972-2002 period (Elbadawi, Makdisi and Milante, 2011, pp. 45-46).

Political powers in the Arab world control translating for children, first and foremost, by means of state-run publishers who are responsible for the implementation of a state strategy. This involves publishing only works (whether originals or translations) which are in line with state ideology and constitute effective tools of socialisation. These state-owned publishing houses then serve as models for private publishers. Al-Hajji's three-volume *Guide* testifies that there was, in the period under analysis, at least one state-owned publishing house in every Arab country, answering to the Ministry of Information or Ministry of Culture and National Guidance (as it was sometimes called in Syria). In addition to this, all Arab countries have official censorship bodies which regulate translation policy, including determining which books are suitable for translation and which are not. The state guidelines may even dictate the manipulation strategies adopted during the translation process, such as those described in the case study.

### 2.1 Children's books in translation

Table 1, which is based on al-Hajji's (1990, 1995, 1999) three-volume bibliographical guide, shows book production for children in the Arab world across a period of almost fifty years.

	1950-1989	1990-1994	1995-1998	Total
Children's books in Arabic (fiction and non-fiction)	6,675	2,381	3,267	12,323
Translated children's books in Arabic (fiction and non-fiction)	911 (13.64%)	236 (9.91%)	287 (8.78%)	1,434 (11.63%)
Total children's fiction in Arabic	5,019	1,587	2,694	9,300
Translated children's fiction in Arabic	911 (18.15%)	236 (14.87%)	287 (10.65%)	1,434 (15.41%)

Table 1. Children's books published in the Arab world between 1950 and 1998 (al-Hajji, 1990, 1995, 1999).<sup>3</sup>

The figures above are telling: the number of children's books published in the Arab world in almost fifty years is limited compared with those of most European countries, and although Egypt and Lebanon have together produced almost two-thirds of the total number, their combined output is far below that of Belgium, a relatively small European country.<sup>4</sup> What is more, translated literature represents only 11.63% of the total number of children's books published in the Arab world, while it accounts for 80% in Finland (Oittinen, 1993, p. xx) and 50% in Italy (ISTAT, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> The figures given are based on al-Hajji's *Guide*, after correction of the many inaccuracies found in it (see Mdallel, 2018 and 2020 for more information about these amendments).

<sup>4</sup> In 1991 alone, Belgium produced 7,182 books in total, of which 44% were children's books (Hale, 1998, p. 190).

The choice of books to be translated is quite revealing in itself. It tells us about how children are conceptualised in that specific context, the function allotted to children's literature and its role as a socialising tool. It also gives us a glimpse of the way the cultural "other" is perceived, the extent to which the community is ready to communicate with this "other" and the elements it is ready to import and those it rejects. According to al-Hajji's *Guide* (1990, 1995, 1999) and my own findings reported elsewhere (Mdallel, 2018), the great majority of translated books belong to the following genres: fantasy and fable, detective novels, sports stories, American cartoons and picture books, with some 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century British and American novels, romances and romantic stories<sup>5</sup> destined for adolescents. These genres constitute the bulk of books translated and sold in all Arab countries.

Conversely, the genres and subjects that are *not* translated in the Arab world indicate values that decision-makers wish to avoid. Though it is difficult to make generalisations in this regard, omissions do noticeably include all types of religious stories that do not deal with Islam;<sup>6</sup> all literature with a pig as main character; Jewish and Holocaust literature for children; imperialistic literature; realistic stories including secret diaries, or anything involving gay and lesbian themes,<sup>7</sup> sex or nudity, juvenile pregnancy, drug addiction and domestic violence; and, in general, anything that questions the authority of parents, teachers or official institutions (al-Hajji, 1990, 1995, 1999; Mdallel, 2018, 2020).

There are regional and temporal differences as well. In the Gulf states, which remain closely attached to Islam and have never had any communist parties, no children's books were translated from Russian during the communist era. On the other hand, these countries massively translate international classics and American cartoon series, such as those of Walt Disney and Hanna Barbera, which may be considered an indirect tool of political propaganda, since aspects of capitalism and the American lifestyle are presented in them in an amusing and attractive way. However, any ideological threats they might present are neutralised prior to circulation. For example, Disney-Jawa, the Saudi company that markets Disney products in the Arab world, makes sure to remove "anything that might be deemed religiously or culturally offensive or unacceptable" (Zitawi, 2008, p. 155), before any translations of Disney stories into Arabic are published.

The situation is somewhat different in Libya. Al-Hajji's *Guide* shows that all books in this country are published by two state-run publishers, Dār 'Arabyya lil-Kitāb (15 books) and al-Munša'a al-'Amma lin-Našr wat-Tawzi' wal-'i'lān (three books), and that the

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<sup>5</sup> Lukens (1999, p. 19) believes that romantic stories are different from romances and constitute a relatively recent development in the literature aimed at young readers: "the romantic story oversimplifies and sentimentalises male-female relationships, often showing them as the sole focus of young lives."

<sup>6</sup> According to al-Hajji's *Guide*, no religious books were translated, mostly for ideological reasons and because Islamic stories were widely available in Arabic (see also the Index of Translated books in Mdallel, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> This genre appeared officially in the United States in 1969, with characters clearly depicted as such. Sporadic reference to such themes, through some thinly veiled homosexual characters, were already present in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in books such as Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the willows* (1908) and L. Frank Baum's *The wonderful wizard of Oz* (1900) (Cart, 2006). It is clear that the genre is well established in American/Western literary tradition, and its non-existence in the Arab world is religiously and politically motivated.

geographical distribution of the languages translated is quite significant, revealing Libya's political and economic alliances. One can find on their lists books displaying official propagandist ideology: three from Russia, two from the German Democratic Republic, one translated from Polish, two from Chinese, two American Indian books, one from Laos, and the rest from various African countries. It is possible that Libyan officials saw Western children's literature as a form of neo-colonialism, much as they viewed Western music, which was banned under the Gaddafi regime and has only been allowed recently since the 2011 revolution (Holder, no date).

Al-Hajji's *Guide* also mentions an important number of Arabic translations of children's books undertaken in Russia and China<sup>8</sup> under the respective communist administrations, and even translations from other countries of the Eastern bloc such as Bulgaria and Albania. In the 1950- 1989 period, 59 of the 86<sup>9</sup> Russian titles translated into Arabic were published in Russia and then exported to those Arab countries that had ideological affinities with the Soviet Union. Among works by Russian authors translated are K. Chukovsky's *The cockroach*, M. Gorky's *The golden hoof*, N. Nosov's series *The adventures of Dunno and his friends*, A. Barto's *The bad little bear*, A. Tolstoy's *The adventures of Buratino*<sup>10</sup> and many of S. Marshak's books. All these authors were known for writing children's literature which toes the official party line.

## **2.2 The Syrian Arab Republic: a case study**

Article 23 of the Syrian Constitution of 1973 stipulates: "social nationalist<sup>11</sup> education is the basis for building the unified socialist Arab society. It seeks to strengthen moral values, to achieve the higher ideals of the Arab nation, to develop society, and to serve the causes of humanity". Indeed, in two books published by state publishers, Syrian researchers Chammas (2004, pp. 119-142) and Kanaan (1999, p. 131) agree that the following values should be inscribed in children's literature:

- 1- National values, which include the set of patriotic values such as love of the motherland, freedom and independence of the motherland, sacrifice (martyrdom) for its security and independence, combating the coloniser, Arab unity and celebrating the glorious Arab past.

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<sup>8</sup> Ho (2004, p. 1032) states that the founding of the People's Republic of China was a defining moment in the history of Chinese children's literature, as the central feature of the new literature "was its accordance with a set of theoretical principles laid down by Mao Zedong and Marxist ideology". Accordingly, the new literature was realistic, portraying the lives of the "workers, peasants and soldiers, as well as revolutionary struggles" (p. 1032). The 1990s marked a second defining moment in Chinese children's literature, since the priority was now to "free children's stories from the didactic mode (...) inherited from the days of the Cultural Revolution" (p. 1033). This shows the extent to which political regimes interfere with writing, translating and publishing for children.

<sup>9</sup> All the titles mentioned are published translations from the Russian original. Although al-Hajji had chosen to consider series as single entries, all the Russian titles included in the three volumes represent single entries except N. Nosov's *The adventures of Dunno and his friends*, which is a series of adventure stories made up of seven separate books.

<sup>10</sup> All the listed titles are published English translations.

<sup>11</sup> Social nationalism is the ideology adopted by the ruling Ba'ath party in Syria. It is a socialist party with a strong belief in the necessity of uniting all Arab states in one nation.

- 2- Rational cultural values, including the love of science and knowledge in general and the promotion of scientific thinking.
- 3- Economic values, which include love and respect of work and workers, love of industriousness, common (socialist) property.
- 4- Social values, which include the love of others, social solidarity, cooperation, common interest, tolerance, humility, faithfulness, unselfishness, the sense of social duties, optimism, etc.
- 5- Moral values, such as cherishing goodness, truthfulness, obedience (to authorities), modesty, religion, etc.
- 6- Human values, which include individual freedom, combating injustice and exploitation and aggression, unity of Arab countries, and rejection of discrimination.
- 7- Recreational and aesthetic values, including the appreciation of beauty in general through the arts and literature, love of hobbies, love of nature, tidiness, wit, etc.
- 8- Health values, which include etiquette, cleanliness and disease prevention.
- 9- Sports values, which include the preservation of a healthy body, strength, activity, love of sport and fairness.
- 10- Personal values, such as adaptability, joy and happiness, bravery, physical appearance showing respect and prestige/might, democratic leadership and self-respect. (Kanaan, 1999, p. 264)

These values show Syria's keen interest in politically socialising its children to face the short- and long-term challenges presented by the political, military, social and economic situation. They also explain Syrian translation policies and the parameters governing the dynamics of translating for children. Many of the values listed here will be first reflected in the books accepted for translation in this semiosphere and then in the strategies of ideological manipulation adopted.

According to al-Hajji's *Guide*, 277 translations (19.31%) of the 1,434 published in the Arab world between 1950 and 1998 were published in Syria. The Ministry of Culture, also called the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance (see, for instance, entry 849 in Index I in Mdallel, 2018), is directly involved in translating for children and produced 24 translations across the period under study. Private publishers also produced books on behalf of or with the approval of the regime, often specialising in specific authors.<sup>12</sup>

The Syrian Ministry of Culture has translated and published many Russian books by authors known for their ideologically committed literature, such as A. Gaidar, S. Marshak, S. Prokofyeva and others. One book worth mentioning in this respect is V. Datskevich's *The little clay hut* (see entry 203 of Index II in Mdallel, 2018), which was translated indirectly from English. The book also contains other stories whose authors are not mentioned on the book cover. However, all of them extol virtues dear to the regime, such as solidarity and cooperation (*The little clay hut*), discipline and justice (*The wolf and the little white kids*) and national pride (*The green island*), or condemn greed, selfishness and individualism (*The fox and the crane*) (see Datskevich, 1994).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For example, the publisher Dār al-Fikr produced ten books by Russian author Sergei Mikhalkov, while Dār al-Ḥaṣād published an equal number by the Italian Gianni Rodari. Both of these children's writers were known for their communist ideology.

<sup>13</sup> All titles given are back translations from the Arabic versions, except *The little clay hut* and *The green island*, which have published English translations.

### 3. Sewell's *Black Beauty* translated into Arabic in Syria

Many of the Western classics published in Syria and possibly elsewhere were subject to heavy manipulation, in which the theme, setting and nature of the source text were changed in translation in order to confer a didactic socialist dimension to the text. In this section, I shall look more closely at the Arabic translation of Anna Sewell's 1877 novel *Black Beauty* in Swan's simplified version of 1987, which was translated as *Al-Ġamāl al-'Aswad* ["Black Beauty"] by Adib al-Inglisi and published in 1991 by the Syrian Ministry of Culture.

A simple comparison of source and target texts shows that the work has been amply manipulated in the process of translation. For a start, the Arabic version has only ten chapters compared to the 19 in the original work, despite the fact that one of the main strategies adopted in the translation of this particular work is actually addition. Similarly, the number of characters has been cut by half, and their names (whether humans or horses) have been changed into functional ones indicating moral attributes. While the characters in the source text have common English names such as Farmer Grey, Lord Westland, Lady Westland, John Manly, Squire Gordon, Mrs Gordon, the horse Ginger, James Howard, Reuben Smith, Jerry Barker, etc., in the translation we have the following: "معتني" ["My stableman 'All-Caring'"], "تعبانا" ["Farmer 'All-Miserable'"], "زوجته" ["Mrs 'All-Arrogant'"], "جشعانا" ["Mr 'Extremely Greedy'"], "غطرسانا" ["Mrs 'All-Mean'"], "أطمعانا" ["Mr 'All-Mean'"], "غلبانا" ["The horse 'Unfortunate'"], "حيرانا" ["The horse 'All-Perplexed'"], "زعلانا" ["The horse 'All-Sad'"], "مكسبانا" ["The salesman 'Profiteer'"], "تسعينا" ["Mother 'Hard-Worker'"] and "مكسبانا" ["The salesman 'Profiteer'"]. While most of the characters in the translation correspond to characters that figure in the source text, they have been assigned actions that are rather different from those of their counterparts to the point that we no longer recognise them. Now, their actions and personalities consolidate the qualities represented by the name. These flat characters thus become tools to serve the new ideological agenda of rejecting certain negative traits such as individualism, greed, selfishness and exploitation, and encouraging the opposing values of discipline, cooperation, sharing, etc.

The setting has also been changed, with the action now situated in Damascus and other Syrian cities and villages such as Sueida, Aleppo, Homs, Antioch and Hama. These locations are introduced in the chapter entitled "Summer excursion", in which some equestrian sports typically organised in these places are described.

#### Excerpt 1

##### Arabic translation

في سهول حمص رأيتها تتسابق الريح في مباريات عديدة، تذكرنا بأمجاد خالد بن الوليد. و تذكرت والدي الذي حدثني عليه أمي، عندما كان يفوز دائما – في منطقته – على زملائه الأخصنة المتسابقة معه.  
(Sewell, 1991, p. 36)

##### Back translation

I saw them [the horses] in the plains of Homs outrunning the wind in many races, which reminds us of the glory of Ḥalid ibn al-Walīd. I also remembered my father, about whom mother talked to me. He would always defeat the other horses in the region.

Setting the action in Syria was presumably necessary to confer more credibility on the new actions and characters and enhance the didactic impact. It also enables the text to consolidate the theme of pride in belonging to an Arab nation (we should not forget that Syria, like Iraq before the American invasion, was a champion of Arab nationalism). The introduction, in the above excerpt, of the historical figure of Ḥalid ibn al-Walīd – an Arab war hero, named the “Sword of Allah” by the Prophet Mohammed – is also very significant in this respect.

The ideological stakes of the translation are made clear right away in the introduction signed by the translator. He declares that “this story is narrated by a horse of a pure Arab breed” (Sewell, 1991, p. 6), which is not in the source text. Later on, he points out that Black Beauty “did not submit to the injustice inflicted on him by his ‘aristocratic’ owner Mrs ‘All-Arrogant’ who was so rude giving him unfair orders” and “showed much resistance and was victorious in the end” (p. 6). Thus, the introduction highlights two pillars of the official state ideology in Syria – Arab nationalism and socialism – which are further developed in the translated story.

The translator has also added elements of plot, action and character. For example, in the following extract, concerning a fire in the stables, material has been added which shifts the responsibility away from the human perpetrator to Black Beauty himself.

## Excerpt 2

### Source text

An hour after that, a man came to the hotel on a horse. One of the hotel grooms brought the horse to the stable.

At Birtwick Park nobody ever smoked in the stables, but this man was smoking... I slept, but I soon woke up again. I was very unhappy, but I didn't know why I was unhappy. I heard Ginger. She was moving her feet and I heard her smelling the air.

Then, I smelt the smoke too.

(Sewell, 1987, p. 15)

### Arabic translation

لا أكنتمكم سرا بأن سبب الحريق الذي سأقصه عليكم كان من جراء اعتقادي بأن التدخين يعين على التفكير. ولقد نشأ عندي هذا الاعتقاد عندما رأيت الأحصنة البيضاء الجامحة في سهوب 'السهل الأزرق البعيد' على جهل كبير بأصول تناول الطعام و الماء. عندما رأيتها تقتلع الأعشاب من جذورها إذا نهشت و تحدث صوت الغرغرة إذا شربت. و قد تأكد لي ذلك عندما قال لي أحد الأحصنة هناك بأن الجماعات في تلك المنطقة، لا تتعاطى التدخين أو المخدرات...

لذلك اشتريت قبل عودتي من المزرعة عددا من السجائر مع قداحة غازية. و عندما انتهت محاضرة معلمي عن "ضريبة الحياة" أخذت مكاني في الإسطبل، قبل المبيت، و شرعت بالتدخين عساه يساعدني على فهم المحاضرة... عساه يحسن حدة صوتي .. عساه يحل عقدة من لساني . غير أنني انتهيت من سيجارتي الأولى دون أن أشعر بالأشياء التي عللت نفسي بها. قلت: سيجارة واحدة لا تكفي، و ربما تأتي لي ما حلمت به من السيجارة الثانية. و رميت بعقب السيجارة فوق التبن المكون إلى جانبي و استأنفت التدخين بالسيجارة التالية التي أوجعت صدري، بدلا من فض مغاليق فكري. شعرت بضيق نفسي و تذكرت قول والدتي بأن السيجارة عكاز النفوس المكروسة التي تطلب المزيد من السجائر كلما ازدادت كرسحة. ندمت على ما فعلت و خلدت إلى النوم، عساني أرتاح من هذه التجربة السخيفة، إلا أن الرقاد لم يرحني. فقد انبعث دخان كثيف من جهتي، أفاق برائحته الكريهة معظم الدواب في الاسطبل.

(Sewell, 1991, pp. 51-52)

### Back translation

To tell you the truth, the reason why the fire broke out [in the stable] is my firm belief that smoking helps people to think. What made me think so is seeing the white horses in that “Far



Blue Plain” ignorant of the ways of proper eating and drinking. I saw them uprooting grass and making nasty sounds when they drank. I was even more convinced when one of the horses told me that these horses never smoked or took drugs...

So I bought some cigarettes and a gas lighter before returning to the farm. When my master’s lesson about “the price of life” was over, I sat in the stable and started smoking hoping that it would help me understand the lecture, improve the quality of my voice and grow more eloquent. However, the first cigarette was finished without anything I wished happening. I wondered: one cigarette is not enough and maybe I can get what I wish after smoking another. Then, I threw the tip of the cigarette onto the hay near me and I kept smoking till my lungs were aching instead of clearing my mind. I was almost suffocating and I remembered my mother’s words as she used to tell me that smoking was the remedy of wicked souls, the more they smoked the more miserable they got. I regretted what I had done and went to bed to have some rest. Sleeping offered me no relief. Smoke coming from my side filled the stable with its awful smell and woke everybody up.

After this, the story continues as in the source text, describing the horses’ terror at being surrounded by flames. However, the way the fire is quenched and its repercussions are very different. In the source text, two of the horses are badly injured, although the stableman was there to help, while in the translation it is the stableman who saves all the horses, except Black Beauty himself, who is badly injured. Then, an investigation is started, at the end of which Black Beauty recognises his errors and is found guilty and sold to another master. This is a very different outcome to what happens in the source text.

These alterations betray a conscious decision to manipulate the text in order to achieve clear ideological goals. The added material serves to condemn all forms of addiction and clarify some of the misconceptions the young might have about the positive effects of smoking. The plot change, in which all the horses escape unscathed except Black Beauty, is also very significant: as the setting of the story is now Damascus and other Syrian cities, letting these anthropomorphic horses get hurt with no one coming to their rescue would damage the image of the state and its institutions in the eyes of the child reader. The incident also introduces notions of justice and punishment. Black Beauty, who is presented in the translation as the cause of this fire, is the only horse hurt, and he is sold to another master to show young readers that punishment is necessary when citizens err. He himself acknowledges the justice of this on pages 52-53, saying:

أنا لا ألومه على ما فعل، لأن أمانة العمل تقتضي ذلك.

**Back translation**

I do not blame him for what he did, his responsibility as a master compels him to do so.

Other additions that have been made in the translation include a whole new chapter devoted to a character called “Farmer All-Miserable” and his family, who embody a number of negative traits rejected by the regime. The following excerpt describes an episode in which Black Beauty and his master visit the house of one of the new characters, which has been added in the Arabic version:

### Excerpt 3

وكما حدثتكم سابقا وصلت عربتنا إلى بيت قريب معلمي، المزارع الثري، السيد "تعبانا" وقت الظهرة [...] ثم قادني إلى اسطبل حيواناته الصغير، لقد فوجئت [...] باتساخ تلك المزبلة بالأحرى. كانت الرائحة الكريهة تنبعث منها. علف الحيوانات فيها مبعثر هنا وهناك [...] ظننت أن السائس المسؤول عن هذه الأمور، مريض أو مشغول بأمور مستعجلة أخرى. إلا أن الحصان الملقب "بغلبانا" [...] أعلمني أن السبب في هذا الإهمال، هو أن سيده "تعبانا" يتشاجر – دائما – مع زوجته السيدة "مشاكسانا"، دائما. لذلك فإنه لا يجد متسعا للالتفات إلى حيواناته... هي الفرس "زعلانا" والمهر "حيرانا" و الحصان "غلبانا" قلت: و أين سائسكم؟ قال الأخير: يغادر المزرعة متى يريد و يعود إليها متى يريد، لا يحاسبه أحد في الحقل. قلت: و ماذا يعمل أولاد "تعبانا؟" و أجابني متهمكا: إنهم عديون، و لكنهم لا يطيعونه. و لعل السبب في ذلك أن الزوجة "مشاكسانا" لا تحترم زوجها "تعبانا" أمام الأولاد.  
(Sewell, 1991, pp. 31-32)

#### Back translation

As I have told you before, the carriage stopped at the house of my master's wealthy relative, Mr "All-Miserable", at noontime (...) then he took me to his small stable or rather his waste dump. The dirt in the place surprised me (...), and bad odours came out of it. The animals' food was scattered everywhere (...). I thought that the stableman in charge was sick or had gone for some business. However, the horse named "Unfortunate" (...) informed me that the reason of all this nonchalance was that his master "All-Miserable" had frequent quarrels with his wife "Troublemaker", and that was the reason why he had no time to take care of his animals; the horse "All-Sad", the horse "All-Perplexed" and the horse "Unfortunate". "Where is the stableman?" I asked. He said: "he leaves and comes back to the farm when he wishes, with no one supervising him". "What about the master's children?" I asked. He answered derisively: "they are many but they never listen to their father because his wife 'Troublemaker' does not show any respect for him in their presence."

The didactic and even propagandist message in the above extract is obvious, as it establishes a clear link between wealth and certain negative values and behaviours ("my master's wealthy relative Mr 'All-Miserable'"), such as greed, broken family ties, laziness, disobedience, disrespect and lack of discipline.

#### 4. Conclusion

Al-Ingli's translation of Sewell's *Black Beauty* closes with the following statement:

إذ كان معلمي الجديد يحفظ كرامتي و أحفظ كرامته.  
يحاسبني و أحاسبه.  
يعاتبني و أعاتبه.  
يسامحني و أسامحه.  
(Sewell, 1991, p. 66)

#### Back translation

My new master preserves my dignity and I preserve his dignity as well, he holds me accountable and I hold him accountable as well, he blames me and I blame him as well and he forgives me and I forgive him as well.

This is ultimately what the translation is all about: to show that the regime is against class society and that all citizens are equal. However, whether this vision is implemented on the ground or not is another story. As we have seen, cultural activities in general, and publishing and translating books in particular, are subject to rigorous state mechanisms

which ensure that only compliant forms of expression are allowed to reach their target public. All the values transmitted by al-Inglisi's translation of *Black Beauty* are those the regime is keen on inculcating in the pliable young.

In the first half of 2011, the Arab world witnessed a number of uprisings or revolutions against dictatorships, which in some cases had an immediate impact on book publishing and translation. In Tunisia, where the process began, the banning of the Ministry of Information was the first demand of all journalists, writers and even laymen and women, and only a few days after the departure of the deposed president, dozens of books which had once been forbidden began to be exhibited in bookshop windows. Since then, the Tunisian discursive environment has drastically changed. We will have to wait until the end of the war in Syria to see how the situation will evolve there. Studying the catalogue of books translated and the textual strategies adopted in them will be one way of gauging if things have really changed in the aftermath of the raging war.

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