

Analysis Of Culture-Specific Items in the Arabic Translation Of Herman Melville's Moby-Dick

Hemza Zeghar^{1*}, Meriam Benlakdar²

^{1,2}University of Algiers 2, Algeria

hemza.zeghar@univ-alger2.dz¹, meriem.benlakder@univ-alger2.dz²

Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the translation procedures adopted by Ihsan Abbas in translating culture-specific items in Herman Melville's novel 'Moby-Dick.' This novel has been selected as a case study because of its eminent status within the canon of American literature, its popularity around the world and the nature of its language. Translation procedures used for dealing with each CSI are investigated using a theoretical model that is developed in this study based on models proposed by Aixelá (1996) and Davies (2003). Particular emphasis is placed on displaying the translator's masterful Arabic translation, his force and exquisite felicity of diction, and how he managed to mitigate some of the insuperable challenges faced in translating culturally embedded references, sea vocabulary, and cetological terms into a language lacking ready equivalents for such highly specialized terminology.

Keywords: Culture-Specific Items; Literary Translation; Translation Procedures; American Literature; Untranslatability.

INTRODUCTION

Overcoming insuperable obstacles is what the translation of elegant prose is about. Only a wordsmith and a conscientious translator of greater technical skills in his own language, like Ihsan Abbas, should attempt to translate a masterpiece of the calibre of Herman Melville's 'Moby-Dick'. Ihsan Abbas was one of those who firmly believe that a language is a living and developing entity nurtured by use. According to this vision, the lack of a specialised terminology should be considered as a shortcoming of the user, not a limitation of the language.

Moby-Dick is an account of an epic sea voyage on board of a whaler ship 'the Pequod' in search of the great white whale Moby Dick. It is a complex novel that can be interpreted on many different levels, on the surface, the story is simple, Ishmael, the main character and narrator in the story, is a constant wanderer, who gets a little bit bored with his job, and decides to go on a whaling voyage for many reasons that he gives but foremost because he is very interested in the mystery of the whale. He meets his friend Queequeg, a Pacific islander, and they leave New Bedford, Massachusetts then Nantucket, then they headed out to the equatorial Pacific. Early on in the voyage, they realised that captain Ahab who wore a peg leg fashioned from a whalebone does not really care about hunting whales, he really cares about one single whale because he wants to avenge his loss of his leg to the Great White Whale, his sole ambition was to hunt down and kill Moby Dick. Boarding the Pequod, he pursues the Great White Whale with his crew, and in their final confrontation, Moby Dick drags Ahab into the sea and his death, all members

of the crew perish, only Ishmael survives, clinging to Queequeg's coffin. In the Bible, Ahab is a wicked king who goes against God's will, in Melville's book, captain Ahab goes against the Great White Whale, which may be interpreted as symbol of God, or the devil, or simply the hidden and ungraspable force that thwarts human intentions. Captain Ahab sees the incarnation of evil in Moby Dick, and in his attempt to conquer evil, he tragically becomes evil himself, a despot who uses his power in a cruel way, almost a Stalinist or Hitlerian character. The extent of Ahab's madness and obsession with the White Whale is captured beautifully in the novel's dialogue:

« *Aye, aye! and I'll chase him round Good Hope, and round the Horn, and round the Norway Maelstrom, and round perdition's flames before I give him up.* » (MD: 132)

Moby-Dick is a big sprawling book, and many have found that it is not an easy read. There are 135 chapters, though some are short, as well as two prefaces and an epilogue. Ishmael the narrator of Moby-Dick says « *to produce a mighty book you must choose a mighty theme* » (MD: 334). In 1850, when Herman Melville began to write his novel, he decided to touch upon them all; race, democracy, sexuality, philosophy and the existence of god. The digressions in the novel simply overwhelm readers with details like waves and many readers quit reading Moby-Dick without getting to the conclusion of the story. There are entire chapters where Melville talks about cetology, the science or the biological facts of whales and whaling, entire chapters about the sea, entire sections about the whales, whalebones and the oil that is exhumed from the whale's head, about the ship and its rigging, its moorings, its anchors, lines, decks and quarter decks.

Moby-Dick will still be found a most difficult book to read and to study, and that none but the most highly educated English speakers are capable of understanding it without the help of dictionaries and constant reference to annotations, and this arises from the circumstance that nearly every paragraph in the novel is intended to illustrate the use of some remarkable idiom, or a rare word, the kind of which are only to be found in highly esteemed compositions. One of the peculiarities of this masterpiece is the use of words which are not only rare but unique and remarkable in the eyes of the learned. It is not too much to say that whoever has read Melville's novel will have formed a notion of every department of purely English and 19th century American culture. The novel is teeming with references and allusions to popular sayings and customs, apt quotations from the Bible, and the citing of proverbs, history and legend, theology and jurisprudence, mythology and the using of the rare and the recondite which is, as it were, a « *compendium of previous texts reworked in a chowder of Melville's own making.* » (Macintosh: 39)

Aside from that, the book is far from restricted to antique words and phrases; on the contrary, it is in some respect extremely unclassical, inasmuch as the author delights to introduce « *neologisms, Melvillisms, nonce words, onomatopoeic words, or provincialisms which have evaded the lexicographers.* » (Babcock: 97). There are many words whose first appearance in writing is in the works of Herman

Melville, but many of these words may have been in colloquial use at the time, and some of these words actually appeared in earlier but less-known literature. It might be better to say that Melville popularised these words and helped ensure their presence in modern English as it developed. (see: Purcel: 797 - 808)

The first and only unabridged Arabic translation of Moby-Dick was first published in 1965 in Beirut by (Dār Al-Kitab Al-`Arabī) publishing house, a second edition was issued in 1980 in Beirut by (Nasser Foundation for Culture), all the other subsequent translations (for there were many) are abridged editions adapted to a juvenile audience. Ihsan Abbas authored more than 75 books covering different fields of knowledge including modern and ancient Arabic literature, law, history, geography, science and political thought. He also translated and co-translated numerous books, including 'The Poetics of Aristotle', 'The Writer as Artist' by Carlos Baker, a collection of essays by H.A.R Gibb entitled 'Studies on the Civilization of Islam', 'The Arab Awakening' by George Antonius. Together with Charles Issawi he translated Ra'if Khuri's 'Modern Arab Thought: Channels of the French Revolution to the Arab East' into English. Scholars have been lavish in their praises, no other Arab scholar and translator has ever received such recognition as Ihsan Abbas, his translation of Melville's 'Moby-Dick' « *not only perfectly evoked the world of the Pequod and the personality of Ahab, but also demonstrated that modern Arabic was fully capable of meeting even the most difficult of translation challenges and of expressing the most complex concepts and ideas of other cultures.* » (Conrad: 13)

Ihsan Abbas served as chair of Arabic Language and director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the American University in Beirut (AUB). Thereafter, he was appointed Professor Emeritus at AUB. He has received numerous awards and memberships of learned institutions including the German Oriental Society, Arabic language academies in Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad and Amman, his numerous awards include a honorary doctorate in humanities from the university of Chicago, and the «Translation Prize from Columbia University for his years of distinction as a translator.» (Conrad: 13-14). His profundity and intellect gained him much admiration and respect around the world. He is « recognized as one of the Arab world's most influential scholars, eulogized in 2003 as the twentieth century's "custodian of Arabic culture and heritage." » (Einboden: 4).

METHOD

A close analysis of each source text against its target is conducted. The analysis targets culture-specific items that are different from the Arab reader's own culture and usually pose translation problems because of their different or non-existent values in the two cultures involved, like food items, nautical and cetological terminology, references to mythology and popular belief, clothing items and foreign terms. The most representative and interesting cases of CSIs have been chosen for the analysis. Translation procedures used for dealing with each set of items are investigated using a theoretical model that is developed in this study based on models proposed by Franco Aixelá (1996) and Eirlys E. Davies (2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Culture-Specific Items In Translation

There are always certain elements in a source text that are more difficult to translate than others, they usually pose translation problems in their transfer because of their non-existent or different values in the two cultures involved. These elements normally require special care, attention and a conscious use of translation procedures on the part of the translator. In his seminal work, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (1965), Catford noted that there are two reasons why a source text item might be translation-resistant, the scholar distinguishes between linguistic and cultural untranslatability. Linguistic problems arise when an SL concept is known in the TL, but not lexicalized (Catford: 94), (eg : the words خالة / خال and the personal pronouns 'أنت، أنتن، أنتما، هما، هن' in Arabic, both English and French lack corresponding words with the same specific meanings). Cultural untranslatability may be observed when a situational feature, functionally relevant for the ST, is completely absent from the target culture of which the TL is a part (Ibid: 99), (eg: the Arabic word 'موشحات' – 'Muwashahat, strophic poems').

The issue of cultural translation has been largely discussed by Arab and foreign scholars, yet it is not uncommon that translation scholars do not offer clear definitions of the notion and of what can be classified in a text as culture-specific. Franco Aixelá, who has done extensive research on the translation of CSIs, defines them as «*Those textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text*» (Aixelá: 58). Newmark's categorization of cultural references that could be present in a source text and possibly cause translation problems is very detailed and could be very useful in the analysis of literary texts, he distinguishes five groups 1) ecology, 2) material culture, 3) social culture, 4) organizations, customs, ideas and 5) gestures and habits (Newmark: 94–103).

Translation Procedures For Culture-Specific Items

Many scholars devoted the whole of their attention to the study and exploration of such cultural differences and language difficulties and suggested translation procedures to overcome them. Translators are well aware that translation loss should not exceed translation gain, and in order to achieve this objective of producing a target text of similar value as that of the source text, they adopt various methods and apply different procedures. Translation procedures, are the tools translators use to overcome translation problems and obstacles. In 1996, Franco Aixelá, in his article (*Culture-Specific Items in Translation*), proposed eleven possible procedures to 'manipulate' CSIs. In 2003, Eirlys E. Davies, proposed a total of seven procedures for translating CSIs in her seminal article (*A Goblin or a Dirty Nose?: The Treatment of Culture-Specific References in Translations of the Harry Potter Books*), she analysed the translations of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* from English into French and German, she looked at the

procedures adopted by the translators with regard to their treatment of individual translation problems of CSIs.

1. Preservation

Preservation is the transference of a source language item into a target text in its original form. According to Davies, this procedure is used when the translator decides to maintain the « *reference to an entity which has no close equivalent in the target culture* » (ibid: 72). Other scholars use different terms to refer to this procedure, Newmark (1988) refers to it as transference, while Baker (1992) prefers to call it translation using a loan word. Three of Aixelá's 'conservation' procedures fall under this heading, namely 'repetition'; which is applicable between languages that use the same alphabetic systems, 'orthographic adaptation'; which includes transcription and transliteration and is used among languages with different alphabets, and 'linguistic (non cultural) translation'.

2. Explication

The procedure of explication is « *dictated by differences between cultures* » (Klaudy: 104). This heading covers two of Aixelá's procedures: 'intratextual gloss' (1996: 62), where a short explanation is added within the text, and 'extratextual gloss', where an explanation is provided outside the text in the form of a footnote, endnote, glossary, commentary, translation in brackets or italics (Aixelá: 62). Davies refers to it by the term 'addition', this technique, according to her, is used when certain semantic elements of the source language do not have formal equivalents in the target language, the original reference is preserved and supplemented with whatever information judged necessary by the translator (Davies: 77). It is highly recommended that the « *additional sentence of explanation* » in the case of explication within the text is not too prominent and wordy, Hickey suggests the use of « *brief presupposition-bearing adjectival or adverbial phrases* » rather than longer sentences (Hickey: 228).

3. Deletion

Deletion is the opposite procedure to addition. According to Aixelá, a CSI is sometimes omitted for ideological or stylistic reasons, or possibly because it is too obscure or can not be interpreted at all, and the translator is « *not allowed or do not want to use procedures such as the gloss, etc.* » (Aixelá: 64). Davies names this procedure 'omission', according to her, such a reasoned decision may be taken out of « *desperation* » on behalf of the translator who decides to erase or delete the culture specific item, « *so that no trace of it is found* » (Davies: 79) because he/she can not find an adequate way of conveying the original meaning.

4. Standardization

Translators may sometimes use a more general concept instead of a specific one, which basically means simplification, rewording or rephrasing what the source text says. Davies refers to this procedure as 'globalization' and describes it as the process of replacing the foreign culture-specific reference for another that is more

neutral or general, making it accessible for the target audience (Davies: 83). Newmark refers to it as ‘functional equivalent’, a procedure that requires the use of culture-neutral word according to him (1988: 83). Using Aixelá’s framework, three procedures fall under the heading of standardization: ‘limited universalization’, ‘absolute universalization’ and ‘synonymy’ (1996: 63).

5. Localization

The procedure which is opposed to ‘standardization’ is called ‘localization’. This term is used here in the same sense used by Davies. According to her, translators may use this procedure to «*avoid loss of effect*» and «*instead of aiming for “culture-free” descriptions*» the translators «*may try to anchor a reference firmly in the culture of the target audience*» (Davies: 84). In other words, the translators replace the foreign culture-specific reference for another that is specific to the target culture, moving the whole cultural setting of the source text closer to readers of the target text. Aixelá terms this procedure ‘naturalization’ (1996: 63). Three of Newmark’s procedures fall under this heading: ‘transference’, ‘naturalization’ and ‘cultural equivalent’ (Newmark: 81-83).

6. Transformation

Borrowing the term from Davies, ‘transformation’ is used here to refer to cases «*where the modification of a CSI seems to go beyond globalization or localization*», the source text item is totally changed in a way that could be considered as a distortion or an alteration of the original (Davies: 86). It is also worth mentioning here that ‘transformation’ usually overlaps with most of the procedures discussed here, according to Davies «*the distinction between this category and some of the others is not clear* » (ibidem), as it is achieved through applying one or more of the above-mentioned procedures. Thus a translator may delete, standardize or localize, etc.

7. Creation

Translators could also create a completely new reference to compensate for its non-existence in the target language. Convenient Arabic terms are often produced by means of ‘derivation’ or ‘compounding’. Derivation or (ishtiqaq) has played the most prominent role in the process of the creation of new vocabulary in Modern Standard Arabic, it has always been considered the most natural way of growth of Arabic vocabulary (Baker, 1987: 186). The non-concatenative nature of Arabic morphology and its flexibility helps Arab translators and lexicographers to generate a number of derivatives and devise new terms on the basis of existing Arabic roots, word formation patterns and molds. Another form of lexical creation in Arabic is compounding, it has traditionally occupied a position inferior to other processes of word coinage such as derivation and arabization. There are two types of compounding in Arabic, (Naḥt) and (Tarkīb). ‘Naḥt’ (Compounding into One Word) means ‘sculpturing’ in Arabic, it consists in the chiseling out or the formation of a single new word out of two different or unrelated words which are

shortened (eg: اللامركزية – ‘alaamarkaziyya, decentralization’). ‘Tarkīb’ (Compounding into Two Words), on the other hand, usually results in noun phrases (eg: متعدد الأطراف - ‘muta’addidu alatraf, multilateral’) (El-Zawawy: 19-20). Three of Aixelá’s procedures fall under this heading, namely ‘dislocation’, ‘compensation’ and ‘autonomous creation’ which corresponds to Davies’ ‘creation’ « *where translators have actually created CSIs not present in the original text* » (Davies: 88).

Analysis Of The Translation Of CSIs In Moby-Dick References To Mythology And Popular Belief

Right at the beginning of the book, before the opening chapter, there is a set of extracts and an etymology, the set of extracts starts with Genesis, readers find mentions of the biblical ‘Leviathan’, which is both a sea monster, the fish that swallowed prophet ‘Jonah’, and it is also something that is fantastical. ‘**Leviathan**’ (MD: 7-8-9-12-94) appears numerous times in the novel and is preserved in transliteration as ‘اللويثان’ (MD TT: 150), except when it was mentioned in Chapters (3, 27 and 30) where ‘**Leviathan**’ and ‘**leviathans**’ (MD : 24 - 99) are explicated as ‘الحوت العظيم’, ‘الحيتان العظمى’, and ‘الحيتان’ (MD TT: 34-160-171). The translation builds on the intended meaning of the word as it is used in those chapters, those are one « of many uses of this word to mean “-whale.” » (MD: 24). Herman Melville borrows creatures and gods from different mythological sources, some of these supernatural beings mentioned in Moby-Dick have established equivalents in Arabic, and Ihsan Abbas accurately uses these equivalents where available. Some references have a readymade equivalent in Arabic, therefore, ‘preservation’ is the norm. Thus, ‘**the Sphinx**’ (MD: 210) is translated as ‘أبو الهول’ (MD TT : 327), and ‘**Prince of the Powers of the Air**’ (MD: 100) which refers in the Bible to the devil himself is translated literally as ‘أمير القوى الهوائية’ (MD TT: 161). With the mythological creature ‘**demogorgon**’ (MD: 137), transliteration is also used as ‘الغرغون’ (MD TT: 217). Another mythological creature is the ‘**Centaurus**’ (MD: 210), it is a fabled monster imagined as man with the body of a horse and half-bestial nature in Greek mythology, a transliteration of the English - originally Latin - name is used to refer to this mythological creature ‘القنطورس’ (MD TT: 327). On a different occasion, this mythical figure appears again in chapter 104 (MD: 336), Ihsan Abbas, lacking a single-word equivalent, inconsistently uses a different form of this literal translation ‘السنطور’ (MD TT: 550). Two exceptions here are the names of ‘**Griffin**’ (MD: 336), a fabulous monster; half lion and half eagle, rendered as ‘العنقاء’ (MD TT: 336) which could be considered a case of ‘localization’, and ‘**Hippogriff**’ (MD: 207) which refers to a fabulous winged animal; half horse and half griffin, is standardized into a more general term as ‘الحيوان الخرافي’ (fabled monster) (MD TT: 336), which could be considered a case of ‘globalization’. The same procedure is also applied with the reference to the chief divinity of ancient

Romans ‘**Jove**’ (MD: 18) which refers to ‘Jupiter’ and ‘**The Fates**’ (MD: 19) which refers to the daughters of ‘Zeus’, the « three Greek goddesses who control human destiny. » (ibidem). These are changed into simply ‘رب الأرباب’ (god of gods) (MD TT: 25) and ‘الأقدار’ (MD: 27).

Cetological Terms

Being fully aware that both English and Arabic are not on par when it comes to the maritime vocabulary, the Arabic translator turned the non-concatenative nature of the Arabic morphology, with unfailing skill, to his own advantage to produce a fairly good number of derivatives. He took the Arabic root ‘حوت’ (‘ḥūt’; ‘whale’) and inserted it into different templatic patterns and added vowels which mark variations, thus, imposing additional meanings to that of the root. Arab readers discover new terms such as ‘تحويت’ ‘taḥwīt’ and ‘حواتة’ ‘ḥiwata’ for ‘whaling’, which means the practice or industry of hunting and killing whales in order to get oil and meat, and ‘حوات’ / ‘حواتين’ (‘ḥawwāt’; ‘ḥawwātīn’) for ‘whaleman’ / ‘whalemen’ or ‘whaler(s)’, which refer to those who work on a ship which is used to hunt whales. The three coinages were derived from the Arabic stem root ‘حوت’ (‘ḥūt’; ‘whale’). This is an excellent example of the ability of the translator to bend the target language to accommodate the expressive power of the source language.

Most of the cetaceans mentioned in the novel do not seem to create translation problems and are, therefore, preserved. ‘**the spermwhale**’ (MD: 112) is given its established equivalent in Arabic ‘حوت العنبر’ (MD TT: 179). Literal translation is used frequently, so ‘**the right whale**’ (MD: 111) is rendered as ‘الحوت الأثين’ (MD TT:) (the antiquated Arabic word ‘أثين’ means ‘authentic’ or ‘right’), the ‘**hump-back whale**’ is ‘الحوت المسنم’, ‘**black fish whale**’ is ‘الحوت الأدهم’, ‘**killer whale**’ is ‘الحوت السفاح’ and ‘**thrasher whale**’ (ibidem) is ‘الحوت الدرّاس’ (ibidem). The ‘**thick-lipped leviathan**’ (MD: 210) is ‘اللويثان الشنفرى’ (MD TT: 326), the classical meaning of the old word ‘shanfara’ is revived here. The term ‘**Cetology**’ (MD: 108) or, the branch of zoology dealing with whales, is translated as ‘علم الحيتان’ (MD TT: 175). The translator applied the technique of intra-lingual translation, the ‘**Sulphur-bottom whale**’ (MD: 111) in Melville’s novel, commonly known today as (the blue whale) is accurately rendered as ‘الحوت الأزرق’ (MD TT: 179) and the ‘**Razor-back whale**’ (ibidem) commonly known nowadays as ‘finback whale’ or ‘the common rorqual’ (the second-largest species on Earth after the blue whale) is translated as ‘الهرقول’ (ibidem), (from the old Arabic word ‘هركيل’ ‘hirkil’ which means ‘great fish or ‘cetacean’). In his rendition of the pancultural names for ‘spermwhale’ listed in Melville’s book, the translator seems to opt for the word ‘إوال’ ‘ewāl’, which is a non-established arabicized form of the English word ‘whale’, instead of the Arabic word ‘حوت’ (‘ḥūt’; ‘whale’). Old English names like ‘**Trumpha whale**’ and the ‘**Physeter whale**’ (MD: 112) are translated as ‘إوال ترومبا’ and ‘إوال فيستر’ (MD TT:

179). Names of foreign origins are preserved in transliterated forms in the Arabic version. Thus, the French names ‘**cachalot**’ and ‘**Baleine**’ (ibidem) are ‘القشروط’ and ‘البلينة’ (ibidem), ‘**Macrocephalus**’ is ‘مقروقفال’. The Swedish name ‘**Grönlands Valfisk**’ (ibidem) is rendered into English by Ihsan Abbas as ‘**Growlands Walfish**’, then transliterated as ‘بال جروفلاندا’ (MD TT: 180). The genitive ‘**ceti**’ of the Latin ‘**cetus**’ (Greek *kētos*) in the word ‘spermaceti’ is rendered as ‘الفاطوس’ (ibidem).

The name of the smaller whale ‘**porpoise**’ (MD: 117) (small cetacean mammal with a blunt round snout) is preserved in transliteration as ‘البربوز’ (MD TT: 185). The Palestinian translator does not rely entirely on substitution, he also provides an additional translation ‘الدوحر’ (ibidem). Compounding into one word in Arabic is called ‘النحت’ (Naḥt, i.e., Compounding by Coinage), the word ‘الدوحر’ here comes from ‘دوبل البحر’ (**sea-hog**) (‘دوبل’ ‘dawbal’; which means ‘hog’ or ‘pig’ in classical Arabic) and (‘البحر’ ‘al-baḥr’; ‘the sea’), abbreviating the word ‘Dawbal’ to daw-, joining it with the abbreviation of the noun ‘baḥr’ ‘ḥr’. It should be noted that the new compound was composed on analogy with the English one, the noun ‘porpoise’ comes from the Old French porpois, based on Latin porcus ‘pig’ and piscis ‘fish’ (NOED).

Another example of successful creation appears in the translation of ‘**sucking fish**’ in chapter 100 entitled (Leg and Arm). According to the Oxford English Dictionary a ‘sucking fish’ refers to a fish furnished with sucker or adhesive organ. In his rendition of the term ‘**sucking fish**’ (MD: 323) as ‘سمكة اليمصوص’ (MD TT: 528), Ihsan Abbas brilliantly formulated a new coinage to convey the same meaning of the original. The Arabic translator creates a new term ‘اليمصوص’ extrapolated from the Arabic root ‘مصص’ (‘mṣṣ’; ‘to suck’ / the verb ‘مَصَّ’).

A third case where Ihsan Abbas exhibits creativity in his translation appears in chapter 94 (A Squeeze of the Hand). The word ‘**slobgollion**’ (MD: 310) (of unknown origin) is a rare word, it was only used by whalers, and it refers to the « *residue left in a tub after sperm oil is broken up and decanted.* ». Herman Melville, « *in accordance with his desire for real originality (...) was the first to use this word in print.* » (Kelley: 406). On the other hand, Ihsan Abbas, digging precious stones of pure brilliants from the inexhaustible mines of the classical Arabic language, offers the term ‘الردغية’ (MD TT: 501). This word was derived from the Arabic root ‘ردغ’ (‘rdġ’; ‘slimy or miry place’), the new coinage ‘الردغية’ is a combination of two antiquated Arabic words; ‘رُدْغَةٌ’ which means (slime, or mire; water and clay or mud) and ‘مَرْدَعٌ’ which means a portion of a camel's flesh situated between the rising part from the middle of the humerus to the elbow. (Lisan al-'Arab: 11).

Nautical Terms

At least two choices can be considered when transferring the word ‘**mast**’ (MD: 124) into Arabic, the first one is ‘صاري’, and the other one is ‘دقل’ (s diql, daql or daqal, pl adqāl) « *literally ‘palm trunk’*. This shows the original material of masts round the coasts of Arabia. » (Hourani: 100). It should be noted that the ‘Pequod’ ‘الباقوطة’ (the name of the whaling ship in the novel) is made of wood grown in America. Thus, the translator’s rendering of the word ‘**mast**’ as ‘دقل’ (MD TT: 199) and the term ‘**bowsprit**’ (MD: 58) as ‘الدقل المائل’ (MD TT: 91) might be an attempt at ‘localization’. The term ‘صاري’ would probably impair the historic quality of the novel. In interview, Abbas himself said that the term ‘دقل’ could be justified though by the fact that it is more « *appropriate* » (Bakkār: 210). In this example, the translator tried not only to preserve the denotative meaning, but also connotations of historical authenticity in his rendition of the term ‘**mast**’.

The explanatory translations of ‘**barques**’ and ‘**brigs**’ (MD:18) could be considered as forms of explicitation. A description rather than the name is given in translation. The translator provides a description of the ships and sailing vessels, based on their definitions in dictionaries. Thus, ‘**barques**’ which refers to (a sailing ship with three, four or five masts) is ‘المركبات المثلثة الأشرعة’ (MD TT: 26) or ‘vessels that use three sails’ (back translation), and ‘**brigs**’ (ibidem) which refers to (a ship with two masts and square sails) is ‘المثلثة’ (ibidem) or ‘the doubled’ which is an abridgement of ‘vessels that use two sails’. An accurate rendering of the term ‘**schooner**’ proves to be too arduous. Explicitation here is excluded, because it may lead to confusion for the simple reason that the term ‘**schooner**’ and ‘**brig**’ share almost the same definition, a ‘**schooner**’ according to the definition of the dictionary means « *a sailing ship with two or more masts and with its sails parallel to the length of the ship, rather than across it* » (“Schooner,” 2008). The translator resorts to the procedure of ‘localization’ and changes ‘**schooners**’ to ‘شواني’ ‘shawani’. Both meaning and etymology of the antiquated Arabic term ‘شواني’ ‘shawani’ prove to be elusive. According to Agius the Arabic term ‘Shīnī’ is of « *obscure origin, the name appears in different forms: shawna, shīniyya, shānī and shāniya (pl shawāni)*. » (Agius: 334). The same author offers clues, explanations and descriptions of the vessel based on the first-hand accounts and writings of famous Arab Muslim historians and chroniclers like al-Idīrsī, Ibn Hawqal, al-Muqaddasī and al-Maqrīzī, and he summed up their descriptions as follows: « *A shīnī carried a single mast with sails (originally two, then three)*. » (Ibidem). It should be noted that a ‘**shīnī**’ belongs to the category of warships while a ‘**schooner**’ belongs to sailing vessels. Explicitation is also attempted with the treatment of the term ‘**sloop**’ (MD: 58), which refers to a small sailing vessel with one mast, the description rather than the name is given in the translation ‘سفينة وحيدة الصاري’ (MD TT: 91) which translates back as ‘one-masted sailing ship’. The same technique is also used with the ‘**luggers**’ (MD:) rendered as ‘ذوات الأشرعة المربعة’ (MD TT: 104) which translates back

as '(vessels) with lug sails'. Another example is the '**Packet**' (MD: 20), there is no single word equivalent for this type of boats in Arabic, 'packets' have fixed days of sailing and they travel at regular intervals between ports and are serviceable for many purposes like the conveyance of mails, passengers and other goods. The translator opts for standardization and changes it into 'سفينة ركاب' (MD TT: 29).

A Combination of two procedures 'localization' and 'explicitation' is also seen when '**maelstrom**' (MD: 247) is changed into 'دردورمائي' (MD TT: 394) which is considered perfectly familiar to members of the target culture audience. The word 'maelstrom' here means a large, powerful and violent water vortex, it is also the name of a celebrated and mythical whirlpool in the Arctic ocean near the western coast of Norway, formerly known to suck in everything that approached it. Ihsan Abbas used the specific item 'دردور' which means (whirlpool, eddy or vortex), and which also denotes a well-known whirlpool off the coast of Oman known as 'الدردور' '**Al-dardour**' 'the whirlpool' (Ochs: 64). In chapter 36 (The Quarter-Deck) the translator opts for the procedure of 'preservation' and renders '**the Norway maelstrom**' (MD: 133) as 'الدوامة الترويجية' (MD TT: 210). Another case of 'localization' is worth mentioning here, the term '**scuttle**' (MD: 198) which refers to a small circular opening or a hatch in a ship's side or its cover, is translated as 'الناوذة' (MD TT: 310). This colloquial Arabic term of persian origin exists in the dialects of the Levant and Middle-East in different forms (الروزنة، الروشن), and it means 'a window, an aperture in a wall or chamber'. The semicolloquial word 'الأنجر' (MD TT: 402) ('أنجر'; anjar, pl. anajir) of the dialect of Iraq (a nautical term of Persian origin) is used instead of 'مرساة' when the author compared the whale's jaw to the '**anchor**' (MD: 253). In the same way, the old Arabic word 'كوئلة' (MD TT: 650) (kawthala / kawthal) '**taffrail**' (MD: 387) imposed itself over the two-word compound 'مؤخر السفينة'.

Despite the clues appearing in the co-text, a case of mistranslation appears when dealing with the nautical device '**bell**', this term which refers to the '**diving bell**' (MD: 238) « *a vessel open at the bottom and with a supply of air in which a person can be let down into deep water.* » ("Diving," 2007), is changed into a completely different one 'جرس' (MD TT: 378), instead of 'غرفة غطس' or 'غرفة غوص', clearly due to misunderstanding, which does not make much sense to the target readers who may find it obscure and unintelligible. This mistake is probably easy to make if the translator is not very familiar with the nautical terminology. The sailing term '**bell**' has two entries in dictionaries, the term '**bell**', often preceded by a numeral, also means « *the time as indicated every half-hour of a watch by the striking of the ship's bell one to eight times.* » (Pearshall & Hanks: 1998). Another case of mistranslation also appears with the term '**Cape-Horner**', which means « *a ship that travels around Cape Horn at the southern tip of South America.* » (Baldwin: 16). Ihsan Abbas made the same mistake by interpreting the meaning of the term '**Cape-Horner**' (MD: 24) despite the existence of the context clue '**ship**'

that appears next to it in the source text. This noun was evidently misunderstood by the Arabic translator, who thought that a Cape-Horner refers to 'رجلاً من رأس هورن' which translates back as 'a man from Cape Horn', the translator seems confused, he adds the determiner 'his' (possessive form of he) in 'وقد غاصت سفينته هنالك' which translates back as 'his ship keeled over there' to indicate that a ship belongs to the man who has already been mentioned in the Arabic translation.

Clothing Items

Clothing items formerly worn by British and American sailors and whalemens also seem to create some difficulty for the translator. The first one is 'monkey jacket' (MD: 26), which means a short, tight-fitting jacket or coat traditionally worn as part of a uniform by sailors, so called from its resemblance to a jacket worn by an organ-grinder's monkey. Ihsan Abbas follows the procedure of preservation and provides a literal translation 'صدره السعدان' (MD TT: 36), the translator provides a description of the attire in the form of an explanation outside the text or a footnote 'هي صدره ضيقة يلبسها البحارة' (It is a tight-fitting coat worn by sailors) (ibidem). Arab readers might be familiar, from entertainment TV shows and movies, with the familiar sight of the strolling street musician and his little monkey (organ grinder's monkey) dressed in a little jacket and given a hat in which to collect a few coins from the passers, by playing a hand organ or grinding out music from a barrel-organ also known as a hurdy-gurdy. Another example is the 'box coat' (MD: 26), a uniform worn by a young sailor. A 'box coat' is an obsolete term which means a thick overcoat, sometimes with a heavy cape to carry off the rain, worn formerly by the drivers of a coach that was pulled by horses, so called from its use by charioteers or coachmen riding on the box exposed to all kinds of weather. The rendering 'معطفاً سميكاً' (MD TT: 36) (thick coat) could be considered a form of 'globalization', the translator did not add any explanation, and the context does not provide any either. It should be mentioned that the term 'box coat' is to be found in the English-Arabic dictionaries, Al-Mawrid dictionary provides 'معطف الحوذي' (coachman's coat) as an equivalent (Baálbaki: 123).

In the same scene, other types of garments are mentioned. These could be considered as cases of 'localization', as Arab readers will still be able to understand the term in Arabic and relate it to their own way of dressing and distinctive traditional culture. The first article of clothing is 'grego' (MD: 32), which means a short, hooded coat of thick, coarse fabric, originally worn by the Greeks and others in eastern Mediterranean countries and the Levant. In the Arabic translation, 'grego' was translated as 'برنس' (MD TT: 44) (burnous, hooded cloak), a long loose flowing hooded cloak of coarse woollen fabric, woven in one piece and worn by Arabs and North Africans. The second item employed by Melville is 'wrapall' (MD: 32), which means, according to the definition of the American scholar Merton Babcock, 'a sailor's heavy overcoat' (Babcock: 99). This term has evaded lexicographers, it is not to be found in lexicons and dictionaries (including

the large historical dictionaries of the English language like the ‘Oxford English Dictionary’ also known as OED). The translator opts again for ‘localization’ and changes it into ‘قباة’ (MD TT: 44) a very rare word in Arabic. According to the Dutch scholar and orientalist of French origin Reinhart Dozy, the word ‘قباة’ means:

«... bleus et longs, qui étaient fermés sur le devant, avec des boutons, et tout à fait échancrés au cou [...] des passages de l'Histoire du Yemen font penser que le قباة est la même chose que le Caftan [...] vient jusqu'à my-jambes, elle est fort échancrée par le devant. (sic)» (Dozy: 352-362) (... a kind of a coloured long tunic, buttoned straight in front, resembling the Caftan, generally descending to the middle of the shanks, divided down the front and made to overlap the chest.) (my own translation).

The above-mentioned descriptions, cited in the scholar's detailed and authoritative dictionary of the names of Arab costumes and wear (*Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les Arabes*), were essentially based on the eyewitness and personal accounts of European travellers, orientalists and connoisseurs who visited the Middle-East before the nineteenth century, and it was also based on a thorough study of various Arabic sources including the (*Travels of Ibn Battūta*) and (*The One Thousand and One Nights*). The third term is ‘**dreadnaught**’ (MD: 32), it is an outer garment of thick heavy woolen cloth, that can defend against inclement weather like storm and cold. In his rendition, Ihsan Abbas used the term ‘قفطان’ (MD TT: 44) ‘Caftan’ which is a long loose piece of clothing, usually made of cotton or silk, tied about the waist with a girdle or a sash. Something must be said about ‘قباة’ and ‘قفطان’. The two choices may create a little confusion for the Arab reader, for the simple reason that the two garments were not designed to protect the body from inclement weather and sea storms but more as garbs worn to enhance the external appearance.

Food Items

Preservation and localization are both attempted in the translation of alcoholic beverages. Names of beverages like ‘**grog**’ (MD: 132) and ‘**rum**’ (MD: 324) were preserved and transliterated in Arabic as ‘الجرّوك’ (MD TT: 210) and ‘الروم’ (MD TT: 529). Another case of ‘localization’ is the word ‘**flip**’ ‘مزر’. A certain kind of beverage, made of kind of millet]: and of barley: or of wheat. An interesting case of ‘localization’ appears when ‘to my mouldy **crusts**’ (MD: 389) is translated as ‘بينما أتناول أنا البقسماط اليابس’ (MD TT: 653). This colloquial word ‘**Buqusmat**’, of Greek origin, appears in different forms (بقصماط، بجماط، بشماط، بقسمات، قصماط، بقصم...) in the different Arabic dialects of the Levant, Iraq, Egypt and North-Africa. It means ‘**army bread**’ in the Galilean dialect, and possesses the meaning of ‘**hard bread**’ in Egypt, «whereas in the Arabic of North Africa, it denotes ‘**bread of sailors**’ [...] ‘**a biscuit of the sea**’.» (Halloun: 190-191, 198). The word ‘**Chowder**’ (MD: 61-63) was actually transliterated into Arabic as ‘الشودر’ (MD TT: 99-101), this could be considered a case of ‘preservation’, it is left to the Arab reader to deduce the

meaning and understand the reference from the context where the chowder's recipe is presented in detail.

Foreign Terms

The exotic foreign words and allusions scattered across the pages of Moby-Dick transport the mind of the reader to far off places. Most of these words do not have established equivalents in Arabic, and they pose difficulties for the translator. With the treatment of Arabic and Islamic terms, 'transformation' appears to be the overwhelming procedure. On two occasions in the translation the translator uses 'transformation' when the name of the Islamic month of fasting '**Ramadan**' (MD: 74) is mentioned. The author used the word 'Ramadan' to designate the « *fasting, humiliation and prayer* » (MD: 64) undertaken by Ishmael's bosom friend Queequeg when they were at the Try-Pots Inn. Ihsan Abbas avoided the replacement of the Islamic term with its common Arabic equivalent 'رمضان' because it resists such substitution, Queequeg is not a muslim, he is a native pacific native who practices a form of animism using his small idol 'Yojo', and therefore, the term 'Ramadan' seems to be a misnomer for what he is doing. The disparity between the fictional character's practices and the Islamic content of the term, which refers to the ninth lunar month of the Muslim year, during which strict fasting is observed from sunrise to sunset, leads the translator to opt for a more general term 'الصوم' (MD TT: 117) ('as-sawm'; 'the fast'). This change could be considered a case of adaptation. The translator consistently uses the term 'الصوم' when 'Ramadan' is mentioned again in the same chapter. Ishmael describes how he « *labored to show Queequeg that all these Lents, **Ramadans**, [...] were stark nonsense* » (MD: 74). The term 'Lent' or 'الصوم الكبير' here refers to a fast of forty days observed by some Christian churches. *Ihsan Abbas chooses to replace the two English nouns (Lents, Ramadans) by an Arabic phrase 'كل ضروب الصوم'* (MD TT: 117) along with an added explanation outside the text. '**Specksnyder**' which means (Fat-cutter) seems to pose problems for both the author and the translator, according to the explanation provided by the Third Norton Critical Edition of Moby-Dick, edited by Hershel Parker, the word 'Specksnyder', which serves as the title for chapter 33, was « *incorrectly anglicized form of the Dutch word speksnijder (with sni instead of the syn sound).... His not recognizing the error suggests that Melville did not learn much Dutch from older members of his Albany family* » (MD: 118). The title is rendered as 'مقطع الشحم' (MD TT: 189), within the text, this word is preserved in its original form and also transliterated into Arabic as 'سبكنندر' (ibidem). The word '**Crappoes**' (MD: 300) which is a derogative for frenchmen, from the French word 'crapaud' (toad) is translated as 'الضفادع' (frogs) (MD TT: 484).

CONCLUSION

As seen from the analysis, the procedure of 'creation' helped the Arabic translator in his endeavour to respond to the disparity between English and Arabic,

making it possible for him to expand the target language to match the source language. In doing so, Ihsan Abbas answers those who consider Arabic to be impractical and not suitable for fulfilling modern needs. The Palestinian translator found himself under the necessity to fashion new words and coin new Arabic terms to compensate for the lack of cetological terms and certain words that are unique to the whaling industry. The non-concatenative nature of Arabic morphology and its flexibility helped him generate and produce a number of derivatives, the new coinages are not established Arabic forms, yet they do convey the meaning in a creative way.

The procedures of ‘explicitation’ and ‘preservation’ were also used. The latter one is applied to the category of mythological creatures, some items are transferred verbatim into Arabic, however, in the absence of a standard transliteration system between English and Arabic, the Palestinian translator was left to his own frame of reference. ‘Omission’ on the other hand is completely absent from the translator’s choices. In some contexts, the translation of CSIs requires solutions oriented toward understanding, ‘explicitation’ or ‘addition’ is the choice of the translator and it might be a fairer technique as the translator provides a description of different kinds of sailing vessels. In some cases he seems to put more effort into them and tries explanation outside the text in the form of a footnote. Few cases of ‘transformation’ with nautical terms, where the item is changed into a completely different one, clearly due to misunderstanding. The translator also found himself obliged to suit Herman Melville’s highly individualized vocabulary and unusual richness of diction, ‘localization’ was a frequently used technique for the treatment of cultural references.

Despite these difficulties, the conscientious Arabic translator strove for the matching and authenticity of both words and ideas, he also strove for transparency, he demonstrated this by his wise and ingenious employment of rare Arabic words, high-classicisms; which enforces the effect of historicity of the novel, and even some colloquialisms and regionalisms in the target text, so that readers in the target audience forget that they are reading a translation. The result was a brilliant rendition which is reputed to be the finest translation by a translator who rightly deserved the elegant sobriquet of ‘*Custodian of Arabic heritage and culture*’.

REFERENCES

- Agius, Dionisius A. (2008). *Classic Ships of Islam From Mesopotamia to the Indian Ocean*. Leiden: Brill.
- Aixelá, J. F. (1996). Culture-specific Items in Translation. Translation, Power, Subversion. Alvarez, E.R. and Vidal, M. C. A. Clevedon & Philadelphia: *Multilingual Matters*, 52-78.
- Baálbaki, Munir. (1973). *Al-Mawrid: A Modern English-Arabic Dictionary*, 6th ed. Dar El-Ilm Lil-Malayeñ.
- Babcock, C. M. (1952). The Vocabulary of *Moby Dick*. *American Speech*, 27(2), 91–101. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/454338>

- Baker, M. (1987). Review of Methods Used for Coining New Terms in Arabic. *Meta*, 32(2), 186–188. <https://doi.org/10.7202/001950ar>
- Baker, M. (1992). In *Other Words: A Course Book on Translation*. London: Routledge.
- Bakkār, Yūsuf Ḥusayn. (2004). *Ḥiwārāt Ihsan Abbas [Dialogues of Ihsan Abbas]*. Beirut: Arab Institute for Research & Publishing.
- Catford, J. C. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Conrad, L. I. (2005). Ihsan Abbas: Custodian of Arabic Heritage and Culture. *Necrológica. Al-Qanṭara*, 26(1), 5-17.
- Davies, E. E. (2003). A goblin or a dirty nose? The treatment of culture-specific references in translations of the Harry Potter books. *The Translator*, 9(1), 65-100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2003.10799146>
- Diving. (2007). In *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 6th ed. Oxford University Press.
- Dozy, Reinhart Pieter Anne. 1843. *Dictionnaire Détaillé des Noms des Vêtements chez les Arabes*. Jean Müller. Amsterdam.
- Einboden, J. (2010). "Call me Ismā'īl": The Arabic Moby-Dick of Iḥsān 'Abbās. *Leviathan* 12(1), 3-19. <https://doi:10.1111/J.1750-1849.2009.01262.X>
- El-Zawawy, Amr M. (2016). *Studies in Contrastive Linguistics and Stylistics*. Nova Science Publishers, Incorporated.
- Halloun, M. (1986). Paxamas and Buccellatum in Arabic and other Semitic Languages. *Studia Orientalia Christiana*, 19, 185-200. <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.SOCC.3.144>
- Hickey, L. (Ed.). (1998). *The pragmatics of translation (Vol. 12)*. Multilingual Matters.
- Hourani, George Fadlo. 1975. *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*. New York: Princeton Octagon Books.
- Klaudy, Kinga (2008): "Explicitation." Mona Baker, Gabriela Saldanha (eds): *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 104-108.
- Lee, Maurice, S. (2006). The Language of Moby-Dick: "Read it if you can". A Companion to Melville, ed. Wyn Kelley. Blackwell: Oxford, 393-407.
- Macintosh, James. (1986). *The Mariner's Multiple Quest*. New Essays on Moby-Dick, ed. Richard H Brodhead. New York: Cambridge University Press, 23-52.
- Melville, Herman. (2018). *Moby-Dick, Third Norton Critical Edition*, ed, Hershel Parker. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Melville, Herman. (1998). *Mūbī Dīk*, trans. Iḥsān 'Abbās, 2nd ed. Beirut: Dār al-Madā.
- Newmark, P., (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. New York: Prentice-Hall International.

Ochs, Peter J. (2000). *Maverick Guide to Oman*. Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company.

Pearsall, J. & Hanks, P. (1998). Bell. In *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*. Oxford University Press.

Purcell, J. M. (1941). Melville's Contribution to English. *PMLA*, 56(3), 797-808. <https://doi:10.2307/458994>

Schooner. (2008). In *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 3rd. Cambridge University Press.