

Lost in (Mis)Translation: Paratextual Framing in Selected Arabic Translations of Orwell's *Animal Farm*

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Abstract: Paratextuality plays a key role in cultural stereotyping and ideological framing of the translated texts and pre-positions the reader by setting certain expectations (Baker 2006). They also serve as a tool of adaptation (Genette 1997), superimposing certain interpretations of the author's intentions and ideologies. Here, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is an optimum example. The rising interest in its Arabic translation, especially in the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings bears on the politicized readings of the text, as manifested in the paratextual elements accompanying its translations. The present study investigates the role of paratextual renderings of *Animal Farm* in mainstreaming ideological frames and cultural stereotypes about the narrative. Drawing on Genette (1997), we close-read peritexts of the Arabic translations and probe potential paratextual functions. So far, sixteen plus Arabic translations of the novel have been published. This recent translational influx reflects, besides literary and cultural significance of the novella, an increasing interest in reading it as symbolizing the recent socio-political change. As a process where content transfer and transform(ation) overlap, translation involves an inevitable degree of bias (Venuti 2012). Orwell's novella was largely appropriated by Arabic translators as a political manifesto, to the disregard of its other literary and cultural valances. For Arab readership, *Animal Farm* belongs to a long line of allegorical tales, not so much different from works like *Kalila wa Dimna (The Panchatantra)*, where the political largely prevails over the literary. The present study thus draws on Lefevere (1992), Genette (1997), Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), Van Dijk (2003), and Baker (2006) in exploring paratextual elements as potential sites for translatorial/editorial intervention, ideological framing, and cultural appropriation of the translated text. It investigates the use of paratextual elements as sites for contestation of agency and validity, and also for interpretive foreclosure in ways that suppress/miss potential layers of meaning in the novella.

Keywords: *Animal Farm*; Arabic translation; paratextuality; ideological framing; interpretive foreclosure.

1. Introduction: Paratextuality revisited

Paratext is an introductory threshold that ushers the readers into the translated text. It represents an "auxiliary" (Genette 1997) or "integral" (Gray 2015) element to the text. Either way, it 'controls' the reading experience and guides the reader's interpretation of it (Amirdabbaghian and Shangeetha 2020: 85). It is also a space

for translatorial/editorial cultural and ideological intervention (Batchelor 2018) and contestation/negotiation of agency. Here, paratextual intervention is a self-reflexive mechanism that sustains translatorial agency. Hermans (1996: 27) notes that the implicitness/explicitness of the translator is embodied in paratextual elements, while Baker (2013: 159) considers the translator as a ‘re-narrator’ who “constructs rather than represents” reality. Building primarily on Genette’s (1997: 1) definition of paratext as inclusive of elements, like titles, prefaces, and illustrations, this study focuses on peritexts; specifically, introductions, prefaces, and front covers (xviii). In their designatory, descriptive, and connotative functions (Genette 1997: 93), these elements can be ideologically oriented by the translator, and thus reflect “translatorial intention”. This is a “strategic maneuvering” to subvert previous translations and/or adapt to “constantly evolving socio-cultural contexts” (Deane-Cox 2014: 26). It is also a repositioning and recontextualizing process ushered through the paratextual elements with their “transformative power” (Albachten and Gürçağlar 2019: 7).

Hence, we explore the potentiality of translatorial/editorial discursive presence in selected Arabic translations of Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, with a special focus on peritexts as part of a process of contestation. We expand the scope of the paratextual analysis beyond translatorial assertion of certain ideologies into self-validatory referentiality (borrowing Herman’s 2007 phrase). The different translators engage in (re)translatorial comparison, each asserting that their translatorial merit (Venuti 2004: 25) as truer to the source text. These retranslations involve a degree of contestatory “tension” (Gürçağlar 2009), which we discuss through focusing on how translators negotiate their merit and subvert other translations of the same text, in an intra-translatorial power game over visibility (Nergaard 2013). We also trace the (inter)textual cues in the translators’ prefaces to identify their subjective voices (Taivalkoski-Shilov 2015; Schiavi 1996), which is sometimes driven by “false consciousness” that determines their “power of representation” (Hawkes 1996: XI). Hence springs the felicity of our revisiting of the paratextual elements in the selected Arabic translations of Orwell’s novella.

2. Literature review

Surveying paratextual literature, we first come upon the theoretical development of the term as discussed by Qun-xing, who identified it as the “translator’s voice” (2016: 178). Paratextuality is invested as a tool for “reframing reality” (Hijjo and Kaur 2017) or propagating certain ideologies (Amirdabbaghian and Shangeetha 2020). This paratextual manipulation can promote “institutional dominance” (Summers 2013: 11) or sustain “ideological closure” (Kovala 1996: 120). In news translation, for instance, Darwish (2006) examines how news making “undergoes a reframing process” that entails reconstruction or cultural adaptation of reality. Besides, Hijjo and Kaur (2017) show how media translation involves a paratextual manipulation or reframing of reality towards promoting certain ideologies. Paratexts are also invested as sites of political activism, as illustrated by Selim (2018) in the English translation of Arwa Salih’s *alMubtasarun [The Stillborn]*. She addresses paratextual elements as aspects of translatorial manipulation of the

original text in the target culture. Amirdabbaghian and Shangeetha (2020) investigate the translator's manipulative paratextual voice in the Persian translation of *Animal Farm* as a means of orienting the narrative's discursive structure. This structuring is addressed in Zabadi's (2022) study of the English translation of Samar Yazbek's *Bawa:ba:t ard al'adam*. He focuses on the translator's textual, contextual and peritextual framing strategies that foreground or suppress certain narratives and enact agency.

Other studies approach paratextual maneuverings in (re)translations as variables in a rewriting process governed by economic, ideological or aesthetic constraints (Lefevere 1985: 237). They constitute microcosmic sociocultural sites for the interplay of structure and agency (Ali 2018). In such a translatorial context, paratexts also govern the source text interpretation. Here, (re)translators are text-reader 'mediators' who influence the process of receiving the source text (Kovala 1996: 120) and anchoring the reader's attention (Kovala 1996: 130), or a means to ideologically control those readers (Kovala 1996: 141; Gürçağlar 2002: 58). This microcosmic space allows for translatorial "reflection and dialogue" (Shamma 2015). Interestingly, our selected translations of *Animal Farm* feature reluctance (Yari and Amirian: 2022) to provide information about their translatorial strategies or the difficulties they faced during translation (Venuti 2013), in favor of an interest in subverting other translations and self-promoting their own. Moreover, retranslations are viewed as "multiple windowpanes" within the same language (here Arabic) to the translated work, allowing us access to endless meanings integrated in the translated work itself (Hassan 1986: 174). Based on the foregoing, our survey reflects a lacuna in the literature addressing the role of peritextual elements, in *Animal Farm*'s Arabic translations, in mainstreaming certain ideological frames, recontextualizing Orwell's narrative in Arabic culture and foreclosing potential valences or layers of meaning in the narrative. So, the present study attempts to approach peritextual workings in the Arabic (re)translations of the novella as sites of translatorial/editorial contestation of authority, negotiation of validity and control of the narrative's meaning(s).

3. Methodology

The paper critically investigates the peritexts (translator's introductions, prefaces and covers) of four Arabic translations of Orwell's *Animal Farm*, with a view to the ways each translator criticized the previous translations as either incompetent or not close enough to the source, or framed a particular reading of the text to the exclusion of another. Towards this purpose, we address the following questions,

1. How selected Arabic translations of *Animal Farm* are framed in mainstream Arabic culture using paratextual elements?
2. How does paratextual intervention foreclose potential layers of meaning embedded in the narrative to the exclusion of others?
3. How does paratextual mediation serve as a site for negotiation of agency and/or contestation of validity?

The analysis aims at disclosing the "ideological and political" orientations underlining the Arabic rendering of *Animal Farm* to reveal the role of the

translators/publishers in sustaining such orientations (Amirdabbaghian and Shangeetha 2020: 84 Hamdan, Naser and Hamdan 2021)). So, we investigate elements like ideology, linguistic and non-linguistic framing, interpretive closure and intra-translatorial contestation. Moreover, the study investigates visual resources, such as images and cover layouts of the translations. It also probes into the use of narrative features, such as temporality and selective appropriation (Baker 2007).

Besides, we qualitatively examine the four Arabic translations of Orwell's novella, by Sabry Al-Fadl (1997), Mohammad Al-Araimi (2006), Shamel Abazhah (2009), and Mahmoud Abdul-Ghany (2014). Addressing these selected (re)translations, we elaborate on how translatorial/editorial peritextual space offers a site for dialogic contestation of agency and also negotiate visibility. These nearly canonical (re)translations best represent the ways different peritextual elements reflect discursive (counter)arguments for translatorial validity and agency enactment and how they underpin certain readings of the source text to the exclusion of other possible valences.

4. Conceptual framework

Conceptually, this study addresses paratextuality (peritextuality) as a manipulative and negotiational strategy. The study of peritextuals allow us to probe latent dimensions in translated literary texts, taking into account Baker's (2006) notion of paratextual elements as means to (re)frame/manipulate by setting and/or excluding certain expectations. We investigate ideological framing, interpretive closure and intertranslatorial contestation as translatorial/editorial strategies that orient the reception (Wardle 2012) of the work translated and sustain the translators' implicit self-assertion and validation. Such elements are further investigated below.

4.1 Ideology

Ideologies are the beliefs of a certain group of people that involve "social, cognitive and discursive aspects" (Van Dijk 2006). They are usually imposed by "patrons or institutions" who determine which books should be translated and published (Lefevere 1992). Lefevere (1992: 14) stresses the inevitable effect of culture on retranslations. Since ideologies are "acquired and expressed" in society (Van Dijk, 2006), retranslations are influenced by the ideology of translators or publishing institutions (Amirdabbaghian and Shangeetha 2020). Therefore, translators may "re-mould" the translation to fit certain ideological frames (Baker 2006). Thus, proper analysis of hidden ideologies in any translated text requires acknowledgement of its social, political, and cultural context (Van Dijk 2003). Darwish (2006: 53) points out that translators may introduce cultural, ideological and spatiotemporal changes in a way that impacts readers' "cognitive behavior, responses, and attitudes". Similarly, Baker (2013: 167) maintains that "selective appropriation" is an essential part of any story, through which translators/publishers propagate their own ideologies. Such translatorial intervention affects the nature and quality of knowledge transfer and thus deserves further study.

4.2 Framing

Frames are “subtle devices” used to represent social events in a way that would simplify people’s reaction to them and guide their understanding of emerging incidents (Norris, McQueen and Cutler 2003). Rhoads (1997) defines a frame as “a psychological device that offers a perspective and manipulates salience in order to influence subsequent judgment” (as cited in Darwish 2006: 67). The process of framing involves “construction of interpretive frames” and “representation” of such frames (Kaufman, Elliott and Shmueli 2003). For Baker (2006: 106), it is “an active strategy that implies agency” and/or conscious participation in the “construction of reality”. It can be achieved through both linguistic and non-linguistic resources (Baker 2007). It can be achieved semantically through the choice of lexical items (Darwish 2006) or use of adjectives. When framing a narrative, translators utilize some narrativistic features, like “temporality” or “selective appropriation” in a “culturally-specific” manner that represents everyday experiences (Hijjo and Kaur 2017). They seek to inform the public and/or persuade them of certain stances (Butler 2012). That is why it is important to investigate how translators/publishers sustain or undermine “contested aspects of the narratives” (Baker 2007: 151) encoded in the source text. This involves focusing on the effect, rather than the process, of framing.

At the non-linguistic level, visual resources can be used to “set up an interpretive context for the reader” (Baker 2007: 158). This visual framing involves the use of devices like images on a translated book cover, given their double symbolic and metaphorical power and their universality as signs that transcend language boundaries (Hijjo and Kaur 2017). To analyze images, their compositional, interactional and representational meanings should be investigated within the producer-viewer nexus. Such analysis extends to elements like facial expression, cover layout, size, color and visual-verbal (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). Yet, framing in this sense is delimiting, since it perpetuates specific valences and excludes others based on respective socio-cultural and ideological perspectives; i.e. interpretive closure.

4.3 Interpretive closure and intratranslatorial contestation

Paratextuality is sometimes employed as a renarrating, reconfiguring or repositioning strategy. The retranslations of Orwell’s novels (*1984* and *Animal Farm* in particular) bear relevant echoes, as they involve a degree of contextual re-embedding of the spatiotemporal and the cultural. In this process, retranslations involve subtle repositioning or reconfiguration of the “here and there, now and then, them and us, reader and narrator, reader and translator nexus” (Baker 2006: 132). Here, paratextual commentary allows the translators to “reframe” narratives by careful realignment of participants in time and social/political space” (Baker 2006: 170). Our selected translators’ paratextual strategies are invested in sustaining the reading of Orwell’s translated novella as an anti-Stalinist political manifesto or as a testimony to the revolution that devours its own children. Through introducing Orwell as a committed socialist, they implicitly impede the possibility of reading

the novella as a fairy story, which is - at any cost - an embedded potential valence. This shall be further illustrated below.

5. Discussion

5.1 Ideology

Drawing on Van Dijk (2003), we examine hidden ideologies in *Animal Farm* retranslations in light of their social, political and cultural context. Since ideologies are institutionally imposed, it is crucial to refer to the four publishers of the selected translations. Sabry Al-Fadl's translation (1997) is published by the General Egyptian Book Organization (GEBO), within the Family Library series. This public organization "narrates" itself as a promoter of "cultural history and renewable visions" (GEBO website n.d.). The series introduction features the photo and signature of the former first lady of Egypt, Suzanne Mubarak, in a gesture that sustains the image of the Mubarak regime as a promoter of culture and reform through mainstreaming "masterpieces of arts and innovation" to sate the public's thirst for "elevated art" (Al-Fadl 1997: 1). Here, the publisher establishes "a cognitive schema" (Wendland 2010) by setting up a number of parameters to guide readers' interpretation and reception of the novella. Readers are told that this work is a "masterpiece" introduced to readers seeking access to "elevated works of art". The series introduction is followed by GEBO Director, Samir Sarhan's introduction, in which he notes that such works are presented to "promising Egyptian youth" as "creative" and "enlightening" knowledge, being "the source of power" in today's world (Al-Fadl 1997: 2). The recurrent adjectives "creative" and "enlightening" guides the readers' reception of the work through underpinning a certain narrative about reality. It reflects the GEBO ideological self-framing as a promoter of culture and enlightenment through mainstreaming canonical world literature in Arabic translations. Such framing encourages the public to read such "serious" and "elevated" works of art (Al-Fadl 1997: 2).

As for Al-Araimi's translation, it is published by Arab Institute for Research and Publishing in (2006). According to the Beirut-based institute and as featured on their website, they seek to "serve Arab culture" through publishing "serious intellectual works of art" that address the causes of the Arab nation. This is a manifest ideological orientation, as the publisher introduces *Animal Farm* as "serious", implicitly indicating that is not meant for children, and as addressing an Arab cause, i.e. indirectly linking it to the recent Arab upheavals and comparing the Arab socio-political context to that of Russia under Stalin.

Likewise, the publisher of Shamel Abazhah's translation, Dar El-Shorouk identifies itself - on its website - as a leading Arab publisher promoting freedom of expression, creativity, and distinction in the book market. This is an ideologically oriented "selective appropriation" (Baker 2006). In the translation's introduction, Orwell's biographical overview features his career as an officer who fought in the Spanish civil war. The translator selectively profiles Orwell as a socialist hero (Abazhah 2009: 5) and thus anchors the readers. No doubt all representations are selective (Schudson 2003: 33 as cited in Darwish 2006: 56). Abazhah's translation was reprinted by GEBO in 2019 through the Family Library Series. Yet, the reprint

carried the title, *A World Inhabited by Animals*, in a twist that bears double denotation. It refers to both the real human world, where humans are not different from animals, and the imaginary world of the novella's animals itself. This slight editorial modification of the title creatively opens up a new way of reading the work. The fourth translation by Mahmoud Abdul-Ghany's (2014) is published by Arab Cultural Center, in the wake of Arab spring revolutions that had erupted in 2011. Within this timeframe, the translation aims at linking the Arab Spring revolutions against dictatorships to that of Stalin's Russia, implying the ideology of the publisher. Such ideological orientation is framed in the way illustrated below.

5. 2 Framing

5.2.1 Framing through linguistic resources

Our selected translators use linguistic and non-linguistic resources to introduce "interpretive frames" for the Orwellian narrative. Al-Fadl's (1997) introduction provides a short biography of the author's life and works. He frames Orwell as "a brave warrior" and "a patriot" who is emerging as a creative writer (5). This frame unveils how paratextuality controls "the reading experiences of the audience" (Amirdabbaghian and Shangeetha 2020: 85). It presets a specific view of Orwell to guide the readers' perception at the pre-reading stage. Regarding the choice of lexical items and adjectives to create certain semantic frames, Al-Fadl describes the novel as "a fable that has political significance" and "an example of a political satire that criticizes dictatorship and authoritarian regimes" (Al-Fadl 1997: 7). He also notes that it exposes the ways a revolution seeking social justice can be "corrupted". He describes the novella as "one of the key political satires in English literature since *Gulliver's Travels*". Moreover, he maintains that the best quotation that summarizes this piece of work best is "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" (Al-Fadl 1997: 7). Framing is conducted here to manipulate "salience" by shedding light on this quotation that highlights corruption of the revolution and thus influences the "subsequent judgment" of the readers before even approaching the novel.

Al-Araimi (2006), on the other hand, prefaces his translation with a justification for his retranslating *Animal Farm*, maintaining that previous publishers, not translators, did not do justice to it, as they published poor quality editions of the translations. He praises Orwell for selecting a "valid topic" and for his "well-versed style" (2). Here, Al-Araimi is creating semantic frames through specific lexical items and adjectives that depict Orwell as a professional writer. His retranslation of the work, he asserts, is due to his "sincere assessment" of Orwell as a novelist and a human being (2). He selectively appropriates certain aspects of Orwell's biography that serve his translatorial narrative, describing Orwell as a "distinctive novelist" and a "committed man" (2). In this "interpretive prompting" (Baker 2006; 2007), Al-Araimi posits as a mediator between the narrative and the readers. Moreover, he attributes Orwell's "renowned" to the publishing of his "masterpiece", i.e., *Animal Farm*. Describing the novella as a "masterpiece" sustains his creation of a semantic frame for the readers, adding that despite initial rejections of the work by some publishers, one million copies were sold after its

publication. Yet, he grabs the reader's attention by describing Orwell's writings as "controversial", a word that relatively distances the translator as objective. This superficial objectivity then crumbles with his qualifying phrase that Orwell "motivated" people to acknowledge propagated tenets and beliefs in face of social and economic problems. He presents Orwell as a preacher of reform, whose works induce the readers to adopt radical change and not to "let others think for them" (3). Al-Araimi's selective use of epithets like "masterpiece, controversial, renowned" can be described as "systemic linguistic choices" that indicate the translator's ideological "classification of reality" (Hatim and Mason 1997: 161).

Abazhah (2009), in his introduction, adopts a similar line of representation. He introduces a biography of Orwell's life, with highlights of his career as an officer in Burma and a soldier in the Spanish civil war. Selectively appropriating specific elements of the biography, like Abazhah, he notes that Orwell's renown followed the publication of both *Animal Farm*, selling two million copies, and *1948*, which was published posthumously. Here, Abazhah too frames Orwell as a hero and a "renowned" writer whose works are literary milestones.

With a slight twist, Abdul-Ghany (2014) tells his readers that the aim of retranslating *Animal Farm* is to transfer the voice, feelings, and ideas of the novel into another language. He adds that in retranslating Orwell's, he is driven by the point that previous translations are "unsatisfactory" (6). He believes that, despite their different translational styles, previous translators failed to convey the symbolic and poetic language of Orwell. In his introduction, he frames Orwell as democratic socialist, quoting Orwell himself to have described *Animal Farm* in one of his letters as "anti-Stalinist". In Abdul-Ghany's words, "This type of novel exposes the failure of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes" (2014: 7). He believes Orwell conceptually compares animal oppression to human oppression.

Critiquing earlier translations in his introduction, Abdul-Ghany judges Al-Fadl's translation as acceptable, though having some issues, like the frequent use of parenthetical sentences to clarify ambiguities. This technique, Abdul-Ghany believed, affects the style and changes Orwell's sentence structure. He also refers to some grammatical mistakes that mars Al-Fadl's translation. This (mis)translation of Orwell's work bears negatively on its aesthetic aspect. For Abdul-Ghany, Al-Fadl's betrayal of the source text is incomparable to Al-Araimi's major betrayal and whose translation is a "curse". He asserts that Al-Araimi omitted some paragraphs and rephrased others, and re-narrated some events unfaithfully. Such betrayal also involves omission of some descriptive paragraphs and animal nicknames and misspelling of some of proper nouns. Consequently, Abdul-Ghany (2014) believes his retranslation of Orwell's is a "dire literary necessity". (Abdul-Ghany 2014: 11, 12).

Overall, three of the analyzed translations' editorial and translatorial introductions and prefaces that preempt the response of the audience to the novella and frame the narrative for the readers in a way that directs them to access it from the translator's angle.

5.2.2 Framing through non-linguistic resources

Since “signs are never arbitrary” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 8), every choice made by the publishers inevitably affects the visual grammar of the cover. The covers designs of *Animal Farm* translations are indicative of various aspects that add to its framing in a vivid manner. Images transcend linguistic and territorial boundaries through their universally acknowledged significations.



Figure 1. Cover of GEBO translation

Figure 1 shows the GEBO 1997 edition, within the ‘World Literature for Youth’ series. Since Arabic is a right to left language, the right side of the frame usually holds known information, while the left holds new pieces of information (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). On the right side of the cover, there is basic information about the publisher, the logo, and the series. The title of the novella is written on the center of the cover to attract the attention of the readers. Here, featuring the “pig” on the cover is significant, knowing that *Animal Farm* represents Capitalist Russians after the Communist revolution and “pigs” represent the Russian communist leaders at the time. As outlined by Rubin (2008: 83), during King Farouk era when there were anti-colonial sentiments in Egypt, *Animal Farm* was seen by the British as then “relevant” to the conditions of the country. Thus, it was translated into Arabic because “pigs” and “dogs” are unclean animals for Muslims. This explains why featuring the “pig” on the cover is a visually significant framing strategy. The publisher hints at the point that the pigs-led revolution is depicted as a total failure, being magnified by the saliently huge image of the pig. Besides, the centering of the pig and its grumpy facial expression are indicative. The pig makes no direct eye contact with the audience, giving an angry side-eye indicating the participant’s reaction to something unknown.



Figure 2. Cover of Arab Institute for Research and Publishing translation. The above cover of Al-Araimi's translation, and unlike the other three covers, depicts, not the pig or the author's name, but the maximized dilapidating fence of the farm. Here, the right side of the frame holds information about the author and the novel in English, while the left side holds new pieces of information. Thus, the given information about the publisher, the logo, and the series are written on the right side of the cover. On the left side, precedence is given to Orwell's name and the novel's title. Unlike the other three covers where the translator's name is not mentioned, this cover features the name of the translator at the bottom center of the cover.



Figure 3. Cover of Dar El-Shorouk translation

In figure 3, the publisher, Dar El-Shorouk, uses Orwell's photo on the cover. The represented participant is Orwell. His photo has visual salience, being centered on the cover. This reflects that the focus here is on Orwell, not only as a novelist, but also as an intellectual. His side-look gives room for indirect address that allows the viewer to create his/her own perspective. Yet, his frontal angle indicates involvement with the viewer. This implies that the viewer is a part of the

participant's world. The verbal components on the upper left side reads, "World Literary Masterpieces" (Abazhah 2009). This is a manipulative strategy that preempts the readers' impression about the novella as part of world literature and a canonical masterpiece. At the bottom of the cover, the name of George Orwell is written, followed by the novella's title in Arabic. Interestingly, the translator's name is absent in a way that reflects the publisher's "selective appropriation". As outlined by Hanna (2018), publishers do not mention the name of the translator in order to give readers the impression that they are reading an original representation of the work, not a translation, adopting Venuti's views of translatorial invisibility. Though Hanna's view sounds valid, it misses the possibility of the publisher's aim at marketability as a propagator of worthy literary and intellectual production, even if at the expense of the translator.



Figure 4. Cover of Arab Cultural Center translation

The above figure features a large-scale photo of the pig as a represented participant from standing sideways. The pig is not looking at the audience as there is no direct address. This indirect address allows the viewer to create his/her own perspective. The barbed fence surrounding the pig alludes to restricted freedom, symbolizing censorship. It also refers to the farm where animals live. Here, precedence is given to Orwell's name on the cover, being placed at the top center followed by the title of the novella. The verbal components on the cover include a sentence written on the body of a pig. This sentence is a literal twisting of one of the seven commandments governing animal farm, "when man becomes behaviorally similar to animals". The verbal language on the cover bears interactive meaning as the declarative sentence is used to lead the viewers to think about what would happen when man behaves like animals. This sarcastic (Arabic) phrase blurs the human-animal border line as early as at the book cover. Besides, the written phrase represents a paronomasiac twisting of the seventh commandment, "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others". It indicates how, through hypocrisy and conceit, humans are almost equal to beasts.

5.3 Interpretive closure and intratranslatorial contestation

Cultural specificity is acknowledged in the translation process, under both domestication and foreignization approaches, as introduced by Venuti (1995). Ironically, this strategy is suppressed in *Animal Farm* retranslations into Arabic.

There seems to be no care for the religious sentiment of the Arabo-Islamic audience, in terms of shifting from pigs to horses or other equivalently lovable animals in the target culture. A partial answer would be the presence of horses in the story, and this means a double modulational effort is required. Ideological manipulation is thus manifested in the choice of pigs, whose Eastern/Western significances are almost conflicting. The pigs that are the cleverest animals in the farm are, for the Arab-Muslims, the filthiest and most insensitive animals that are forbidden to raise or consume. In this light, we understand the shift in Malik Salman's (Dar Al Saqui 2020) Arabic translation, where Orwell's pigs feature as cows on the cover. This shift echoes Rubin's (2008) note (already quoted above) about Abbas Hafez' translation, though the cow image here is 'modernized' with its pair of glasses, necktie and suit. Salman's recent translation seems to be adapting to the then temporarily rising political Islamism or avoiding any dislike or protest on the part of a religiously tense readership. This domestication of Orwell's pigs is also a translational strategy that involves paratextual negotiation of values and that answers to the requirements of the target (Arabic) culture. Yet, this repositioning overlooks the sociocultural significations of pigs in the source culture.

Instead of employing the preface as a threshold for the Arabic readers' smooth access into the novella, the translators of Orwell manipulated it to underpin their ideological conceptions about the author, focusing mainly on his political orientations rather than illustrating their translational strategies or objectively introducing him to the Arabic readership. Their prefaces also profile the narrative as a political (socialist/anti-Stalinist) manifesto, foreclosing the possibility of reading it as a multilayered allegory. While similar 'animal farms' novels can be read as belonging to children's literature (Margo 2012; Hoult-Saros 2016), Orwell's *Animal Farm* is read in the Arab world solely as a political satire. One clear example is its dramatic reenactment with a "Palestinian flavor" on the Freedom Theatre, in the Jenin refugee camp, West Bank, directed by Nabil al-Rae. The recording broadcast on Youtube is entitled, "*Animal Farm* reflects modern politics in the Middle East" (AP Archive 2015). This repositioning of Orwell's masterpiece in Arabic translations echoes Bassnett and Lefevere's (1990) approach to translation as an act of "rewriting" and/or "manipulation". Here, retranslation also serves as an act of appropriation and a site of negotiation of socio-political values within the Arab context. Interestingly, cultural "relevance" is observed in the translation too. The Arabo-Islamic cultural specificity encouraged the British to produce the novella in Arabic, in the belief that counter-Communism will be furthered by the fact that "pigs and dogs are unclean animals to Moslems" (as cited in Rubin 2008: 83). This approach is not unusual to Arabic culture, knowing that the pigs in *The Three Little Pigs* fable transform into sheep in some Arabic translations on the grounds that they are considered "impure" by Muslims and "cannot be eaten" (Oittinen, Ketola and Garavini 2017: 123-127). With its twisted interpretation as an allegory, the work can be read in different and, sometimes, contradictory ways.

When Orwell wrote the novella, entitling it *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story*, he meant to braid politics and art, or the political and the aesthetic, into "one whole" ("Why I write" in *An Age Like This*, 2021). However, it was first rejected by some

publishers because then children's literature didn't sell well. The subtitle, "A fairy Story" was frequently dropped in both English editions and their translations. Given the critical time of its publication, it is possible that Orwell intended such confusion. At face value, the novella belongs to children's literature, driving T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) to compare it to *Gulliver's Travels*, whose canonicity was already established. Interestingly, Stevenson's is essentially a political satire that is largely read in the Arab world as a fairy story, with its political overtones subdued. This is another example of how tricky the winding routes of literary fame through translation are. The different readings of the two works could be ascribed to the highly metaphorical language of the former, on issues like whether humans are innately noble or savage, as compared to the direct and proclamatory language of the latter. Yet, in Arabic translations, the former is almost entirely read as belonging to children's literature, while the latter is classified as a political satire. Orwell himself compared his work to Stevenson's regarding the literary-political nexus. While he accentuated the need to distinguish the literary from the political (Orwell 2021: 52), translation itself, involving biased interpretation, is in some sense a process where transferring and transforming overlap. The Iraqi poet, Saadi Youssef (1934-2021), in "Return to George Orwell: Ten Years Later," bitterly notes that Orwell was appropriated and clad in political garb, as a Cold War writer, through Arabic translations of *Animal Farm* and *1984*. For Youssef (2022), Orwell was rather 'exploited' through the "paid" exploitation of his Arabic translators. This politicized reading of Orwell was induced by his anti-Stalinism and socialist commitment. Such political involvement backfired with Eliot's refusal to publish the novella, due to its "Trotskyite" political nature. This political hue seeped into the public reception of the author's works, even in (re)translations a long time later (*Letter from T S Eliot* 1944). Al-Fadl's preface bears echoes of Eliot's judgment of the novel, though in a more positive tone. He described *Animal Farm* as a canonical political satire, like *Gulliver's Travels* (1997: 6) and claimed that Orwell's fame rests largely on both "*Animal Farm* and *1984*", in a way that presets the frame for Arabic readership. No wonder Orwell was already acknowledged as internationally recognized for his *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as canonical masterpieces. The two novels, along with *Homage to Catalonia*, "constitute a remarkable Trotskyist trilogy that is unique in British literary history." (Newsinger 1999: 23). Here, Al-Fadl seems to be translating the narrative embedded in the critical literature on Orwell as well. He further declared that the novella is a "fairytale or a myth with a political significance" that is based on the "story of the Russian Revolution and its illusioning and deceiving of the individual under Stalin's rule" (1997: 6). He refers to the manifest "satirical" sense and "wild imagination" that make the work comparable to Swift's *Gulliver*, in its political cynicism. Yet, he also reiterates that such cynicism undermines Stalinist political dictatorship and celebrates individual freedom (1997: 6-7). To underpin his framing of the novel, Al-Fadl concludes with a note that the novella "disillusions" the reader with the revolution and its winding routes, from "advocating social justice" to an "eventual brutal change" where some (animals) become "more equal than others." (1997: 7) Al-Fadl's casual reference to Orwell's imaginary perspective does not

hold long, but is rather submerged in his manifestly political/politicized framing of the work. Here, T. S. Eliot's (as a publisher) politicized reading of the novella is sustained in the translator's (Al-Fadl's) preface, inducing a two-fold impact. It encourages Arab readers to approach the work as a political satire but then it forecloses the possibility of reading it as a children's literature book. Al-Araimi too adopted this politicized narrative about Orwell, referring to him as a "committed" writer (2006: 2). This designation implies the translator's own perception of Orwell and in turn reflects a judgmental attitude that is meant to orient the reader's view. Such translatorial intervention accounts for the politicized reading of Orwell in Arabic. Still, it should be acknowledged that this translatorial framing was a reiteration of the English critical literature about the novella, which is described as "an oddity", where the "fusion of allegory and fairy story" is substantial (Marks 2011: 139). The irony here lies in the fact that though the novella could "easily and instructively be read to young children, it created more problems for Orwell than any of his realist novels for adults" (139).

On the other hand, the paratextual and metadiscursive elements in the retranslations of the novella reveal changing perspectives, where the focus shifts to the political and the propagandist at the expense of the literary and the aesthetic. Unconventionally within the Arabic translational field of literary works, for example, the cover of El-Shorouk's translation features the picture of George Orwell himself, a choice that bears manifest socio-political significance, presetting the political frame for the readers, with Orwell's domineering persona, much like a Big Brother, hovering over the literary. A quick survey of the Arabic translations of foreign literary works would indicate that most translations feature the covers of original works or focus on the content of the works themselves. See for example the Arabic translations of Stevenson's *Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland* and *Treasure Island*, Carol's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, Brown's *Da Vinci Code*, Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, and many Dostoevsky's and even Shakespeare's works. [Only few works feature the pictures of the authors in their Arabic translations, which include for instance Virginia Woolf's *Pockets Laden with Stones* and *Orlando*, where the author's presence eclipses her fictional persona.] No wonder Al-Araimi refers to Orwell as a "maximally committed man and novelist", who "resented" the policies of his own imperial government in the East and who fought alongside the Republicans against Franco in Spain. Al-Araimi also mentions the initial rejection of the novel by publishers, though without naming such publishers or citing the reason for rejection. Al-Araimi concludes by noting that Orwell, who was neither a politician nor a philosopher, urged people to think radically and to believe in human's ability to make change. This revolutionary sentiment in Orwell is further highlighted by Al-Fadl in his preface, as he indicates how Orwell's fight against the oppressive Communists in Barcelona left in him a lifelong "bitter grudge" against Communism (Al-Fadl 1997: 5) and how *Animal Farm* and *1984* represent a warning against dictatorship in the wake of Nazim and Stalinism. (Al-Fadl 1997: 6) Such an attitude, on the part of many Arabic translators of Orwell's novella, shows a relative shift

from the role of the translator as a mediator. Their prefaces, which are supposed to serve as a windowpane or a threshold into the translated work itself and by corollary the source culture, turn into a space for translatorial judgments. Here, the expected discussion of the translation process and employed strategies is relegated in favor of the translator's subjective voice. Al-Araimi's preface for instance reflects a condescending attitude, as he pokes holes at other translations in a way that implicitly involves self-promotion. This is a pragmatic strategy that preempts the readers' approach to the (novella in) translation. Even as he directs his criticism at the "cheap edition" that is no better than a "school notebook", he still feels the work needs to be retranslated. Had he really meant the edition was unbecoming of Orwell's worth, he could have published a new, deluxe edition of any earlier translations, without taking the trouble to retranslate it. Hence, the peritexts turn into a field of translational contestation coupled with a politicization of the translated text. This meta-discursive battle almost disorients or diverts the reader's attention from the literary-aesthetic value of the text. Al-Araimi for instance, introduces his translation of the novella by criticizing the commercially unprofessional release of weak and incompetent translations. For him, Orwell was a highly 'committed' writer who joined the Indian Imperial police in Burma, before quickly resenting the attitude of his government's policy in the East, as reflected in his first novel, *Burmese Days* (1934).

Abdul-Ghany, too, criticizes in his preface the poor earlier Arabic translations that "have dwarfed Orwell's language", which is densely laden with poetic metaphors and symbols (2014: 7). This, for Abdul-Ghany, was why he retranslated the work, engaging in a technical translatorial contest with these other translations. He commends the translation for infusing a "new life into this excellent novelistic text." (6) Similarly, he applauds the Iraqi poet Saadi Youssef's "thrilling" 1997 translation of Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933). On the other hand, he severely criticizes other Arabic translations of *Animal Farm* that did injustice to the novella's plot and narrative. He judged Sabry Al-Fadl's 1997 translation as "somewhat acceptable", referring to some of its translatorial flaws, including the translator's ambiguous rendering of Orwell's long sentences, his interpretive interventions and the frequent grammatical and stylistic mistakes. Abdul-Ghany's criticism of Al-Fadl's translation extends to the reviewer, Dr. Mukhtar As-Suwaify, who -for Abdul-Ghany- failed to redress the translator's linguistic and stylistic abuses to Orwell's work (2014: 10-11). These abuses are minor when compared to Al-Araimi's "major betrayal" or "terrible rendering" marred by ambiguity, undue omissions and inept rephrasing (2014: 11). He maintains that retranslation of *Animal Farm* is a literary requirement, given the novella's significance in a world "abounding with injustice and oppression" (2014: 11). He finally describes his own translation as a "translatorial experimentation initiated by Orwell's Great fans" (2014: 11). This translatorial stand reflects a judgmental, condescending and propagandist attitude on the part of Abdul-Ghany, regardless of the quality of his own retranslation. Here, his preface serves a two-fold purpose, one is presenting Orwell as a committed writer and a staunch advocate of freedom and equality, and the other is implicitly self-promoting his own

retranslation through devaluating previous translations. Still, no single (re)translation gives clues to the process of translation itself, the translational strategies or why any of these translations is worth reading. So, while translators like Al-Araimi and Abdul-Ghany compete for visibility in their prefaces, the lack of information about their translatorial identity and strategies curbs their agency and visibility. Despite this seemingly paradoxical translatorial positioning, the four translators use their prefaces as liminal spaces for introducing the author and contextualizing the novella.

And while Al-Fadl and Abazhah focus on this socio-cultural function, Al-Araimi and Abdul-Ghany engage in intra-translatorial, and perhaps extra-translational, contestation for validity and agency in a self-promotional manner. Interestingly enough, almost all the translators avoid any discussion of the strategies or the translational problems faced. This translatorial judgmental attitude means that the readers themselves need to be aware, at this vestibular stage, of the extra-translational (self-promotional and propagandist) elements in the translators' prefaces. With our selected translators, the Genettean "undecided zone" that should usher the readers into the world of the (translated) text ushers them into the paratextual world or the intra-translatorial contestation, and indirectly invites them to engage, not only in the process of reading but also, in the process of comparing the different (re)translations of the text. No wonder this judgmental translatorial stance is coupled with interpretive foreclosure that brings together negotiation of translatorial/authoritative validity and of sociocultural values.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of peritextual elements in the four translations shows that each translator re-narrates the novella and imposes a specific interpretation towards controlling or guiding the readers' reception of the narrative. This re-narration reflects translatorial/editorial ideological bias and highlights the temporality of the narrative, where the translator/editor 1) (re)positions the author, 2) frames the narrative, and 3) selects cover images that promote specific ideologies. Our discussion unpacks the ways selected Arabic translators/publishers of *Animal Farm* invest the peritextual space as sites for framing the narrative and interpreting it in a manner that forecloses other potential layers of meaning. While Orwell's work ostensibly belongs to children's literature, the translatorial/editorial peritextual intervention sustains its political valence. In turn, they miss the potential of reading it as a fairy story. This translatorial misreading restricts the interpretive possibilities of the novella by sustaining the initially propagandist cause of translating it into Arabic. We believe the translators/publishers' ideological framing of the novella diverts the readers' from other potential valences that could bring more joy and destabilize a monolithic interpretation of the novella.

Based on our analytical and critical peritextual study of these Arabic translations, it is clear that the different translators/publishers employ peritexts as a means of subtly embedding the narrative in the local context, judging its value and critiquing other translations in a way that expands the scope of translation to include the meta/paratextual and the metacommentative. Here, the paratextual praxis

determines the value of the text/narrative and entwines the translational and the sociocultural. The analysis also shows how the translator's paratextual intervention underpins and mainstreams certain interpretations of the source text to the neglect or (indirect) exclusion of others, foreclosing the possibility of multilayered interpretations. All selected translations focus on *Animal Farm's* message as a political satire to the neglect of its fairy story-layer. They paratextually sustain their discursive translatorial presence. This indicates how necessary it is to revisit Arabic translations of the novella towards opening new avenues for reading the source text as more than just a political manifesto.

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