

Literary Criticism as a Basis for Literary Translation Practice George Orwell's « Animal Farm » Translated into Arabic by Mahmoud Abdelghani as a Sample

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Abstract;

This paper is about the relationship that links literary criticism to literary translation and its role in making translation more effective and appropriate. Translation studies being a branch of linguistics and philology which deal with the structure and the role of the language could have a central role in mediating between languages and cultures, ensuring intelligibility of messages migrating from a language into another. Thus, studying shifts in literary translation makes the task of the translator more difficult and pushes him to turn away to literary criticism in translation studies.

So, in order to make our study more fruitful we've chosen one of the more ideological novels that constitute an actual stake for translators especially those who deal with languages with different cultures and ideological backgrounds. It is *Animal farm* written by George Orwell and translated by many translators around the world.

We try in this paper to focus on the Arabic version carried out by the translated Mahmoud Abd Elghani and how literary criticism could help to enhance that translation.

Key words: Literary criticism- Literary translation- Practice- Arabic- Animal farm

Introduction

The study of literary criticism is tightly linked to translation, especially in the context of contemporary Arabic literature, and these two disciplines still maintain a fruitful dialogue that shapes the reception and interpretation of translated works. The theoretical framework of this research relies on a double inquiry related to the nature of literary translation and the role played by literary criticism in mediation between languages and civilizations. Indeed, literary criticism, Beyond being a simple exercise in esthetic evaluation, acts as a tool for refining the understanding of textual nuances, stylistic, and cultural connotations that translation must either convey or adapt. This dynamic is particularly sensitive in the Mediterranean and Arab space, where ideological, historical, and linguistic stakes profoundly influence translational choices and critical reception. The complexity of literary translation in the Arab world is revealed notably through some emblematic examples such as « Animal Farm » of George Orwell, which

is a work carrying powerful political and social stakes. The Arabic translation of this text cannot be separated from the tensions that characterize the region, nor from the linguistic specificities of Arabic itself. Studies show that imported literary models are often subject to constraints that alter their original scope, producing semantic deviations that sometimes affect the text's reception in the target society. Literary criticism, by the way, plays a crucial role in identifying and analyzing such shifts, thereby illuminating both the mechanisms of translation and the needs and expectations of Arabic-speaking receptors.

So, joining research in literary criticism to translation is essential for better understanding the transformations and resistances shaping the reception of texts in the Arab world. Criticism is no longer limited to an esthetic judgment; it becomes a site of reflexivity and close analysis that supports translation in its chasing of an authentic and respectful cultural dialogue. From this perspective, this study proposes to examine how literary criticism can help to improve the quality and relevance of literary translation, while identifying and describing the anomalies and deviations that mark this process, specifically in the context of translating « Animal Farm » from English into Arabic. Then, a research question should be asked: how does literary criticism contribute to improve literary translation, and to avoid the frequent anomalies that mark literary translation in the Arab world, the example of the famous « Animal Farm » translated from English into Arabic by Mahmoud Abdelghani?

The answer to this question may clarify the role of literary criticism in strengthening literary translation, where critical analysis is not confined to a mere aesthetic judgment, but becomes a true engine for translational excellence. Literary criticism constitutes, however, a space for systematic reflection that makes it possible to question translational choices, reveal tensions and compromises, and highlight the cultural and political stakes underlying the transposition of a text from one language to another.

The precise definition of research objectives is a fundamental step in structuring the analysis rigorously, both regarding the role of literary criticism in strengthening translation and the specific anomalies observed in the Arabic translation of « Animal Farm ». Thus, one of the main objectives is to examine the critical process as a tool for engaged and reflective literary translation that goes beyond the pitfall of simple linguistic transfer, while the other concerns the systematic identification of translational anomalies, whether ideological, linguistic, or paratextual, in the emblematic case of « Animal Farm ».

Regarding the methodology adopted, a combination of qualitative methods is the most relevant way to address the complexity of the topic. A comparative analysis of Arabic version of « Animal Farm » makes it possible to identify translational gaps, omissions, as well as strategies of reformulation or euphemization, while cross-checking these observations with paratextual critical comments included in different editions. This approach also relies on a dialogic reading of existing critical and translation studies in order to contextualize the observed phenomena within a rigorous theoretical framework, integrating in particular the concepts of textual amplification/diminution, domestication versus foreignization, and ideological interference. In parallel, an examination of Arabic critical reception, including studies on censorship and editorial constraints in the Arab world.

Literary criticism and Literary Translation

The comparative examination of literary critical approaches in literary translation makes it possible to grasp the complexity and diversity of the methods used to analyze the transfer of a text from one language to another ; intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic translation according to the idea of R. Jakobson (Jakobson, On linguistic aspects of translation in. L. Venuti (ed.) the translation studies reader, 2004, pp. 138-143) , especially in sensitive cultural contexts such as the Arab world. Beyond a simple evaluation of formal quality or linguistic fidelity, contemporary literary criticism now incorporates a plurality of paradigms that view translation as a multidimensional interpretive act, generally with « an artificial gap between practice and theory » (Munday, 2012, p. 25) where stylistic, ideological, political, and cultural issues are intertwined. These various critical orientations reveal the expectations and cultural prescriptions that weigh on translation, thereby helping to shape the translator's role as a cultural and political agent.

Some approaches emphasize the hermeneutic dimension of translation « valorization of the foreign » (Munday, 2012, p. 45), viewing it as a complex process of negotiation between the source text and the context of reception, and « based on the individual's inner feelings and understanding » (Munday, 2012, p. 45), requiring a deep understanding of the symbolic and discursive implications of the original text. These analyses often rely on reception theory and post-structuralist criticism, with particular attention to transculturality and “interdisciplinary conceived approach” (House, 2015, p. 1), where the translator is invited to avoid purely linguistic equivalences in order to render the underlying ideological tension. In the case of *Animal Farm*, this critical approach highlights the issues of power and domination conveyed by Orwell's fable, and it suggests that translation must carry a subversive charge capable of resisting censorship or self-censorship in the Arab world.

Other critical schools, influenced by postcolonial studies and decolonial theories, view translation either as a site of resistance or, conversely, as a mechanism the role of which is reproducing cultural innovation and change. In that sense, translation is not neutral: it is shaped by relations of power, editorial constraints, and local ideological frameworks, starting from the fact that "translators and academic scholars are important gatekeepers especially when ushering the literature of minority culture into the space of world literature (Nilson & Brigid, 2013, p. 31)". Among other theories that are between literary criticism and literary translation dealt with translation studies:

-Systems theories: potysystem theory (G. Toury, Itamar Even Zohar, Andrew Chesterman, Theo Hermans...

-Cultural and ideological turns: Andre Lefevere, Lawrence Venuti...

-Functional theories: Skopos , text types (Catharina Reiss, Hans Vermeer , Christiane Nord, Snell Hornby...)

Studies on Arabic versions of *Animal Farm* repeatedly show that translators and publishers may adapt the text to fit political sensitivities, sometimes reducing its “goodness, appropriateness, effectiveness or correctness” (Malcolm, 2009), and reducing also its critical force or reframing its allegorical dimension.

Translation anomalies in the Arab world

Going ahead from the fact that « There could be no literature without writers and translators; there could be no literature without readers. Texts do not exist in isolation but are shaped by the reading process » (Nilson & Brigid, 2013, p. 7), anomalies observed in literary translations into Arabic point to a series of fundamental divergences that go far beyond simple lexical or grammatical errors. These anomalies are partly tied to ideological and political constraints specific to reception contexts in the Arab world, where power relations and discursive control strongly influence translational processes, despite the will of translators to “take pride in what they do” (Robinson, 2012, p. 28). However, due to “separate code-units” (Jakobson, On linguistic aspects of translation, In: R.A. Brower (ed.), On translation, 1959, pp. 232-239) rather than “entire messages”, research on Arabic translations of *Animal Farm* reports ideological filtering, omissions, paraphrase, euphemization, and manipulation of paratexts, all of which can weaken the political force of Orwell’s satire.

Seeking literary criticism “to reconcile their ethics as human beings with their work as translators” (Robinson, 2012, p. 28) literary translators in the Arab world are showing, although, a persistent gap between literary criticism and literary translation practice. This disconnect is fueled by the lack of institutionalized dialogue between the two spheres, which slows the development of integrated critical approaches capable of correcting ideological and cultural bias in translation. Without stronger collaboration, translations of politically sensitive texts such as *Animal Farm* remain vulnerable to alterations that compromise their emancipatory function and their capacity to enrich Arab sociocultural debate.

Reception of *Animal Farm*

Classical approaches to literary translation, such as functionalist or dynamic theories, especially those associated with Nida or with “German translation tradition (Schleiermacher, Goethe, Benjamin, Steiner, Berman), modernism with (Pound, Borges), Czech and Russian formalism (Jakobson, Even Zohar, Toury, Lefevere), semiotics (Jakobson, Lewis), linguistics (Jakobson, Harvey, Mason), post-structuralism (Lewis, Spivak, Derrida, Rafael...)” (Venuti, 2012, pp. 6-7), put the stress on “ what words in the source text mean, and what words in the target language will best capture or convey the meaning” (Robinson, 2012, p. 90), adapting, by the way, the message to the target context in order to ensure effective reception. However, when applied to *Animal Farm* and its Arabic translations, these models must coexist with more critical perspectives that value alterity and the ideological force of the source text. The translator then becomes not only a linguistic mediator but also a reception agent, often constrained by political pressures and required to engage within the “interdisciplinary nature of translation studies” (Venuti, 2012, p. 3).

There is a fact that “translation studies was thought of as a specialized branch of philology, applied linguistics, or comparative literature» (Robinson, 2012, p. 124). The critical agent, also, whether a literary critic or a translator who is critically aware, performs an interpretive watchdog function. This agent examines terminological, stylistic, and discursive choices that may either reduce or reinforce the work’s subversive power, balancing respect for both the letter and the spirit of the text. In this logic, “structural differences between languages complicate the

translator's task, the goal should be 'to vary but the dress' not to alter or destroy the substance" (Venuti, 2012, p. 18). So, literary criticism becomes both an analytical discipline and a tool for regulating translational practice, helping ensure that translation is seen as a reflexive and committed act in which each deviation or reformulation deserves interrogation.

The study of critical reception and scholarship devoted to the Arabic translation of *Animal Farm* reveals a complex dynamic in which reception is not limited to esthetic appreciation, but is embedded in deeply rooted ideological and political debates. This reception helps shape both the status of the translated text and the limits within which possible translations are expressed, making reception a continuum in which literary criticism and translation continually overlap and help to know whether the translation in question is "target oriented (acceptable) or source-oriented (adequate)" (Hermans, 2014, p. 45) .

The Arabic reception of *Animal Farm* also reflects a growing awareness of the need for literary criticism that goes beyond merely identifying translational deviations and instead engages in constructive dialogue with translators. The comparison is indirect, according to Gideon Toury; "it is always a comparison of categories selected by the scholar, in a construct which is purely hypothetical. We can never compare texts by simply juxtaposing them. We need a frame of reference to examine the positive and/or the negative links between T1 and T2, and to examine them from the point of view of both T1 and T2" (Hermans, 2014, p. 48). Critical reception, thus, encourages renewed reflection on the very function of translation in politically sensitive contexts, opening the way to a more committed literary criticism invested in transforming the conditions of translation.

Critical concepts applied to translation

Applying the fundamental concepts of literary criticism to translation makes it possible to place translational work within a rigorous reflexive dynamic, while highlighting the multiple interactions between source text, target text, and sociocultural context, and where "literatures enter into contact and interfere with each other" (Hermans, 2014, p. 150). The goal is always to reach the meaning installed between different texts of different languages, and "the way of thinking and experiencing the world" (Munday, 2012, p. 59). Literary criticism, in its primary vocation, analyzes the *esthetic*, *structural*, and *ideological* dimensions of a text; when applied to translation, it pushes analysis beyond simple linguistic comparison and treats translation as a complex discursive act with its own meaning and historical inscription, within the frame of textual and extratextual norms (Venuti, 2012, p. 176).

Among the key concepts often mobilized such as norms correspondence, equivalence, hermeneutic, skopos, reception... the main concept is fidelity, no longer understood as a mechanical correspondence between words, but as accurate, in the sense of truly conveying the informational content of the source text" (Robinson, 2012, p. 145), as a fidelity to the spirit, tone, and critical thrust of the original. This is especially relevant in *Animal Farm*, where political satire and biting irony form the core of Orwell's message. Literary criticism applied to translation therefore emphasizes that every stylistic or lexical choice affects the text's subversive tone and can either preserve or weaken its critical charge.

Another essential concept is ideology, understood as the set of representations, norms, and power relations that shape the production and reception of texts “New wine in old bottles” (Nilson & Brigid, 2013, p. 120). Literary criticism thus shows that translation can never be a neutral act, but is always embedded in symbolic power relations between cultures and institutions.

English source text next to Arabic translation

A rigorous comparative study between the original English version of *Animal Farm* (Orwell, Updated on december 2014) and its Arabic translations requires a methodological combination of linguistic, textual, and contextual analysis, aimed at highlighting the shifts, alterations, and adaptations specific to intercultural transfer. After emphasizing the importance of critical paratexts as tools for interpretation and translation guidance in the Arab world, this comparative stage focuses directly on the text itself by systematically confronting the two versions in order to identify the anomalies affecting literary translation.

The rigorous identification of anomalies in literary translation is a crucial step in the methodology presented above, because it makes it possible to detect the deviations that compromise the integrity of the source text and, consequently, the reception of Orwell’s message in the specific context of the Arab world. These anomalies are not limited to mechanical or linguistic errors; they also include ideological, cultural, and discursive distortions linked to the multiple meanings carried by *Animal Farm*.

Mahmoud Abd Elghani’s Arabic translation مزرعة الحيوانات generally follows Orwell’s plot but introduces pragmatic, cultural, and ideological shifts that can be treated as “translation anomalies” when compared closely with the English source.

Lexical and cultural shifts

The translation often adapts or replaces culturally loaded English items with more familiar Arabic terms, which may alter nuance or connotation. For example, “Animal Farm” (ST) «مزرعة الحيوانات» (TT) could be an acceptable literal rendering, but it foregrounds “animals” more than “farm” and may reduce the sense of “proper name” that the English title carries. The most acceptable meaning in Arabic would be حيوانات المزرعة form that emphasizes on the animals of the farm but not the farm itself. The same thing for the expression “Old Major” (ST) translated by «العجوز ميجر» أو «ميجر العجوز» (TT) Keeping “Major” as a foreign proper name thing that obscures the military rank connotation in English; adding «العجوز» that shifts focus from his ideological authority to age. Another example that concerns lexical and cultural shifts in the revolutionary song of the animals “Beasts of England” (ST) «وحوش إنجلترا» أو «حيوانات» (TT) for which Mahmoud abd elghani has chosen «وحوش» adding a more negative, bestial tone than “beasts” in context, while «حيوانات» neutralizes the quasi-mythic flavor of the original slogan.

Ideological re-encoding

Studying Abdel-Ghani’s translation (Mahmoud, 2014) focus on selected extracts and passages about the relations of production (labor, work, exploitation) used to show how ideology and socio-political context after the Arab Spring affect the reinterpretation of Orwell’s Marxist Leninist satire with dialogues containing implicature, irony, and indirect criticism of

leaders. So, studies on Arabic translations of *Animal Farm* note that some translators, including those working in Egypt's contemporary political climate, tend to reframe Orwell's allegory in more overtly national, Arab, or Islamic terms, with "ideologically-induced shifts" (Mohamed Ali Abd Elghafour, 2021). This may also appear in Abd Elghani's version as: "The tyrannical Mr Jones" (ST) «السيد جونز المستبد الظالم» (TT) in which the double epithet «المستبد الظالم» is an explicitation that strengthens the moral condemnation beyond the English, turning a descriptive phrase into an overt political slogan.

The same thing for words that refer to "England" (ST) «إنجلترا» or «الوطن» / «البلاد» (TT) in some rhetorical contexts replacing a specific country with a generic «الوطن» nudges the allegory toward a more direct "national" reading for Arab readers, which is an ideological domestication rather than a neutral transfer.

Further, passages about work, rations and exploitation are central to the ideological reading of both the source text and Abdel-Ghani's target text. For instance, "All that year the animals worked like slaves. But they were happy in their work; they grudged no effort or sacrifice." (ST) Translated by «عملت الحيوانات طوال ذلك العام بأقصى طاقتها، وكانت سعيدة بعملها، لا تبخل بجهود ولا» (TT). Here "worked like slaves" (كأنهم عبيد) is omitted or neutralized into «بأقصى طاقتها», which turns an explicit metaphor of exploitation into a morally neutral description of diligence. The ideological anomaly lies in the shift from a critical simile "slaves" to an almost positive ethic of hard work, which changes the socio-political meaning of the scene.

Checking domestication strategies in Arabic *Animal Farm* translations notes that culturally loaded items or slogans may be replaced with Arabic expressions carrying different associations thing that could re-encode the allegory in a more "local" moral religious register, which again shifts ideological emphasis. Let's go to "Four legs good, two legs bad." (ST) «من يسير على أربع» (TT) «مُحسن، ومن يمشي على اثنتين مُسيء» (TT)

The binary "good/bad" becomes "محسن/مسيء", which in Arabic tends to evoke moral and often religious discourse more than simple evaluative adjectives. It domesticates the political chant into a generalized ethical maxim, slightly blurring its connection to class and species difference as a metaphor for proletariat vs. humans.

Pragmatic anomalies:

The pragmatic study of Abd Elghani's translation shows that certain choices weaken or shift Grecian implicatures irony, politeness, and indirect criticism in dialogues and slogans. The following example may be a proof: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." (ST) «كل الحيوانات متساوية، لكن بعض الحيوانات أكثر مساواة من غيرها» (TT) a translation close to literal; however, the oxymoronic force of "more equal" depends on the reader's sensitivity to logical contradiction. Any attempt to "clarify" by adding «في الحقيقة» or changing word order risks diluting the satirical implicature.

Moreover, in squealers persuasive lines such as "You don't want Jones back, do you?" (ST) «أنتم لا تريدون عودة جونز، أليس كذلك؟» (TT) the tag question «أليس كذلك؟» is pragmatically adequate, but if strengthened to «بالطبع لا تريدون عودته» the manipulative, faux-consultative tone becomes more authoritarian, shifting characterization.

This pragmatic study analyses how Abdel-Ghani's choices sometimes weaken or alter implied meanings compared with the English text. The pragmatic study on Abdel-Ghani stresses that Orwell often criticizes leadership indirectly, through irony, understatements, and contradictions between what is said and what happens.

Some Arabic choices reduce this implicature by turning irony into more straightforward, "moralizing" statements or by clarifying what should remain ambiguous. Let's see the example "Napoleon was always right." (ST) In the novel, this slogan is obviously ironic; its repetition invites the reader to see the animals' blind obedience as tragic and absurd, translated into a more literal, doctrinal Arabic by «كان نابليون دائماً على حق، ولا يجوز الاعتراض على أوامره» (TT) where the clause «ولا يجوز الاعتراض على أوامره» adds a prescriptive moral rule that is not in the source; it turns an ironic slogan into an explicit statement of legitimate authority.

Stylistic anomalies: register and narrative voice

Arabic literary style conventions lead to differences in sentence rhythm, tense usage, and degree of rhetorical ornamentation. These can become anomalies when they noticeably depart from Orwell's plain, almost reportorial style; simple narrative sentences like "It was a bright cold day in April..." (ST) rendered in more decorated Arabic like «كان يوماً صافياً بارداً من أيام أبريل،» (TT), adding «يبعث القشعريرة في الأجساد» as a metaphorical flourish not present in the source, moving the text toward traditional Arabic literary narration. Also, colloquial farm dialogue such as "Shut up, you fools!" (ST) «!اصمتوا أيها الحمقى» (TT) instead of a more rustic «أسكتوا يا أغبياء» when the formal vocative register smooths over the roughness of the animals' speech, weakening social satire that relies on plain, coarse language.

Studies of Animal Farm translations show frequent mismatches in register: simple, concrete English is rendered into more high-flown Arabic prose, affecting characterization and the "peasant" feel of the animals' voices. Look at the example» 'Comrades' he said, 'you have heard already about the strange dream that I had last night.' (ST) translated by «يا رفاقي، لقد علمتم» (TT) «لقد علمتم سلفاً» "you have heard already" shows a more formal, bureaucratic register than the simple colloquial English. Also "last night" «ليلة» constitute a slightly more literary phrasing. Here the anomaly is that the voice of an old, rather simple farm pig (Major) becomes stylistically elevated, which weakens the illusion of rural or popular speech and modulates the text's social positioning.

Finally we can say that too many sentences where register and style (plain rural speech vs. elevated Arabic) contribute to change the tone and characterization of the target.

Procedural anomalies

Analyses of Arabic Animal Farm translations show frequent shifts in translation procedures (modulation, omission, and addition...) that can be considered as anomalies when they affect the meaning. The case linked to omission of minor ideological markers the example of "Comrade Napoleon" (ST) in the source text which would be translated by «نابليون» (TT) without «الرفيق» in the target dropping «الرفيق» erases the explicit socialist register; it is an omission that reduces the allegory's connection to communist rhetoric.

On the other hand we find addition of clarifying phrases such as the translation of "He read out the Seven Commandments" (ST) by «قرأ الوصايا السبع للحيوانات على الحائط أمام الجميع» (TT),

adding “على الحائط أمام الجميع” which supplies spatial detail not found in the sentence in a harmless way but shows a tendency to narratorial expansion rather than strict fidelity.

“All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.” (ST)

Here, the contradiction in the slogan is the essence of Orwell’s satire. In Arabic, pay attention to whether Abdel-Ghani keeps the paradox intact as in this sentence: «كل الحيوانات» (TT) or he smooths it into something more logical or explanatory, as in the following: «كل الحيوانات متساوية، غير أن بعضها أرفع منزلة من البعض الآخر». So, replacing “more equal” (أكثر مساواة) with “أرفع منزلة” removes the oxymoron and makes the sentence logically coherent, thereby weakening the satirical absurdity of the regime’s discourse.

Conclusion

Literary criticism makes a fundamental contribution to literary translation by providing an indispensable analytical framework for fine-grained understanding of texts and for detecting the multiple issues that go beyond simple linguistic transposition. In this sense, it opens a much broader horizon than conventional translation by integrating cultural, ideological, and aesthetic dimensions.

Regarding the Arabic translation of *Animal Farm* specifically, literary criticism reveals its major strengths by highlighting Orwell’s polysemy, rhetorical complexity, satirical irony, and political charge. At the same time, it also shows the limits of current practice, since the anomalies identified in Arabic translations still point to structural shortcomings at the linguistic, cultural, and political levels.

A genuine reflective partnership between criticism and translation could not only correct these dysfunctions, but also enrich the political and aesthetic scope of translated works, making possible a high-intensity intercultural dialogue. This suggests that the translation of *Animal Farm* into Arabic can serve as an exemplary case for thinking about the revolutionary potential of a literary criticism fully integrated into translation practice in the Arab world.

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