



# The Image of the Jew in Arabic Translations of The Jew of Malta

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### Abstract

This study explores the image of the Jew as portrayed in an Arabic translation and a retranslations of an Elizabethan play, Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. It draws on insights of key theoretical concepts of Translation Studies, especially the polysystem theory, discourse analysis and pragmatics, to demonstrate their relevance to the analysis of drama translation, and in particular, the image of the Jew in Arabic translations and retranslations. The study proves the influence of background cultural, political and historical factors on the translator's rendering of the source text into the target text. The study attempts an in-depth literary analysis of the relevant texts with the purpose of finding out how the essential lexical, semantic and pragmatic components of the work of art can be wittingly or innocently manipulated to create a certain image that may not have been intended by the original author of the work. The question the study attempts to answer is whether ideological and cultural backgrounds interfere in the translation.

**Keywords:** image of the Jew, Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, Translation Studies, polysystem theory, comparative analysis, manipulation, Arabic translations, retranslations, pragmatics.

## 1. Introduction

Arabic translations of *The Jew of Malta* clearly display the influence of the cultural, historical and political backgrounds of the time of translation as well as the translation methodologies adopted by the individual translators who reflect their own norms and sensibilities. Additionally, the translations discussed, Nasr Abdul-Rahman's (1967) and M. Enani's (2020), differ greatly as a result of the personal literary abilities and methods adopted by the relevant translators. The two versions of Arabic translation analysed here represent two images of the Jew: one subjective and both wittingly and unwittingly made different from the one conveyed by the source text, and another objective and faithful to the original text and to the insights gained from the various trends of the contemporary Translation Studies.

The comparative analysis used here, informed by the insights of the polysystem theory and the pragmatic approach as applied to literary translation, aims at showing how the final image of the Jew is transformed or manipulated in a translation and a retranslation of the work discussed. The polysystem theory illuminates the various factors that influenced both translation and retranslation since the literary work should not be studied in isolation of the rest of the literary system. There should be "awareness of the possible existence of translated literature as a particular literary system" (Even-Zohar 192) within other cultural, social and political systems as the concept of polysystem "denotes a stratified conglomerate of interconnected elements, which changes and mutates as these elements interact with each other" (Shuttleworth & Cowie 127). The comparative analysis explores as well the conversational language of the characters in verse and prose to determine the intended layers of meaning of the source

text and how its illocutionary act is recreated, as understood by J. L. Austin (98), in the target text. The significance of tracing the inherent manipulation in translated works arises from the fact that retranslations usually attempt to be more faithful to the source text, stripping earlier translations of limitations and restraints of their historical and cultural context, which is an endeavour to recreate the original work in a new almost original work. The translator does a creative work similar to that of the original author. This shatters “the assumption that translations are not only second-hand, but also generally second-rate” (Herman 8).

## **2. The Jew of Malta**

If, after a close examination of Marlowe's text, the translator comes to the conclusion that *The Jew of Malta* is not a historical drama, in so far as all characters are fictitious, and the possibility of replacing the Jew by any member of an alien minority group, the translator may realize that Jewishness is not the driving force in the play. After all, the question of religion is never stressed in the common sense of the term. As early as act II, iii, Barabas is joined in villainous machinations by a Muslim Turk, forming a double wicked force in the supposedly peaceable Christian island. Additionally, the conversion from one religion to another seems to be devoid of any deep faith or even intellectual convictions. So, what does happen in Marlowe's play? Here is an outline which shows how the question of faith (or religion) is almost irrelevant to the action. The play is introduced to us by Barabas who is flaunting his cynicism and parading his ability to amass a huge wealth, apparently by illicit means.

Before we hear Barabas, however, we hear the Prologue introducing the play. The Prologue is presented by an imaginary character called Machevill, no doubt in order to suggest the bad

name of Machiavelli (1469-1527). The latter is supposed to be "the essence of self-interested calculation" (Siemon 9). This character is presented to establish the ethical frame of reference for the protagonist: When he concludes his 36-line speech with a damning association with Barabas, we are meant to expect a man who says:

I count religion but a childish toy,  
And hold there is no sin but ignorance.

*(Prologue 14-15)*

Soon enough, Barabas has his wealth expropriated by the hypocritically Christian Maltese who need his money to pay the imperial tribute demanded by the Ottoman Turks. The fact that these are Muslims appears to be irrelevant to the action of the play. Religion seems in effect to be 'a childish toy' to everybody in the play. No sooner is Barabas denuded of his money than he plots to recover his wealth by having his daughter pretend conversion to Christianity in order to have access to his house which is turned into a nunnery and thereby get hold of the gold he has hidden, literally, under the floor boards. He also forces her to exploit her beauty in fatally entrapping two sons of prominent Christians. Aided by a captured Muslim Turk, called Ithamore, bought from Malta's slave market, Barabas manages to kill off the entire nunnery, including his daughter. He also pretends to have been converted to Christianity and uses Ithamore to help him corrupt two friars whom he entices with his pretended conversion. Rotten to the core like his master, Ithamore is seduced by a prostitute to turn against his master. Amazingly and ludicrously disguised as a French musician, Barabas kills Ithamore, the prostitute and her pimp with poisoned flowers. When he is arrested after the killing of his daughter's lovers, Barabas feigns death and so escapes as

the Turks invade Malta, then betrays the island to the invaders. Stunningly, he is made governor, but in an act of crass stupidity, he now believes that it is better for him to live under Christian ruler – the former Governor whose son he has killed. He entrusts the latter with a new plot aimed at betraying the Turks and regaining power. Barabas blows up the Turkish troops with explosives, thinking that this should earn him the Governor's gratitude. The Governor catches him, however, in the trap he has designed for the Turkish leaders, and sends Barabas down, through a trapdoor into a cauldron where he dies in the boiling water.

### **3. The Jew of Malta as a farce:**

A number of features of the action in *The Jew of Malta* combine to produce what may be described as the spirit of the farce with irony turning out to be an unwitting statement of truth, though one at a deeper level. To irony must be added the coincidences, some improbable or even impossible, which are common in farce, but also in comedy. To begin with there is the fact that the slave bought by Barabas happens to be as wicked as can the protagonist hope him to be. The slave is a Muslim Turk, and his alliance with the Jew, ostensibly on account of their opposition to the Maltese Christians (who have captured the Turk in war and expropriated the Jew's wealth) spells out the dark fate of the Turk. He is killed by his master alongside his beloved prostitute and her pimp. The exultation by both Jew and Turk in killing Christians is therefore ironic: it is the type of irony where an action is self-reflexive. Having succeeded in killing the nuns, as though it were a game won, the Turk frivolously asks the Jew if he might also like to kill off the monks in a near-by monastery; Barabas's answer is equally frivolous:

*Barabas*: Thou shalt not need, for now the nuns are  
dead.

They will die with grief.

(IV.i. 15-16)

This facetious remark is an echo of the waggish question which Ithamore asks Abigail:

*Ithamore*: A very feeling question: have not the  
nuns fine sport with the friars now and  
then?

(III.iii. 32-3)

Then there are the deliberately incredible incidents which are frowned upon by the critics if occurring in a tragedy but are allowed in comedy, and a fortiori in farce. Take the reported scene of the duel in which the rival suitors of Abigail stab each other at the same moment, killing each other instantly. Harry Levin tells us in *The Overreacher* (1952) that this is practically impossible, but then the 'logic' of the farce allows it. Then consider the jovial mood prevalent in the killing of Friar Bernardine:

*Barabas*: Come on Sirrah,  
Off with your girdle, make a handsome  
noose;  
Friar! Awake!

*Bernardine*: [waking up]  
What do you mean to strangle me?

*Ithamore*: Yes, 'cause you use to confess.

*Barabas*: Blame not us but the proverb, Confess  
and be hanged.  
Pull hard.

(IV.i. 141-7)



Having choked the friar, and expecting the other friar to arrive soon, Barabas takes Ithamore's advice and stands the dead man up, supported by his staff "as if he were begging of bacon" (IV.i. 154). Medically impossible, this device is based on Marlowe's supposition that rigor mortis (the stiffening of the body) occurs immediately after death. The scene if enacted on the stage may engender a reaction of embarrassed laughter from the audience—just another instance of the farcical elements in the play.

#### **4. A Conundrum?**

A conundrum is “a riddle, especially one whose answer is usually a play on words” says Chambers Dictionary, 2014. Other dictionaries define it as a puzzle of any kind. The former definition is more applicable to the position of the Arabic translation of Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*. The answer to his conundrum is how to deal with a play that uses historical material in building up a play that is ahistorical, a paradox, a farcical play that has a serious topic, or an oxymoron. Marlowe manipulates history in devising a dramatic structure which is farcical although the material is potentially tragic. Intent on unveiling the hypocrisy and moral degradation of the nascent mercantile capitalism in England, Marlowe makes use of the traditional image of the money-worshipping Jew; but realizing that a ‘Jewish problem’ does not exist at home, he chooses a foreign setting, in Malta, for his play. Almost the same situation may be said to obtain in the Arab East, but with the crucial difference that a ‘Jewish problem’ of a different kind exists. The options available to the translator are therefore either to render Marlowe’s vision as a farcical ahistorical treatment of a serious topic in its original context, or to give the Arabic reader a modified version of Marlowe’s play,

taking into account the context in which the Arab-Israeli conflict creates a new kind of ‘Jewish problem’. The first option may be defended as a faithful representation of Marlowe’s vision, the second may be regarded as a presentation of the traditional European image of the Jew, as interpreted to be behind Marlowe’s play. The first option therefore requires a faithful rendering of the features of the source text, primarily the rhythm and the rhyme (if they exist) but also the stylistic feature conducive to the creation of the ironic tone of the text. The second option means that the translator may unobtrusively manipulate the text so as to produce an image of the Jew, which is concordant with both the Arab and foreign views of Jewishness, even if appearing to be accurate. The second option has to use subtlety in lexical choices, syntax change, subterfuge in omission and additions, and finally, deliberate or unwitting miscomprehension. Alternating or combined, these fractures change the tone of the text, primarily by destroying the irony employed, even if only of some of the various forms mentioned above.

The Nasr Abdul-Rahman Arabic translation of *The Jew of Malta* was published in July 1967, a few weeks after the June 1967 defeat of the Arabs by Israel, commonly referred to as ‘the Jews’. The magnitude of the defeat was not openly admitted and the whole war was regarded as a mere ‘setback’ on the glorious Arab road to prosperity. The potentates of the regime blamed the defeat on the intervention of European big powers, playing down the capacity of the Jews as fighters and as an independent ‘force’ to reckon with. This was the spirit which Nasser’s speech on the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1952 Revolution stressed. Quoting and elaborating on what Nasser said, the editor of the translation of the *Jew of Malta*, Ismail al-Muwafi says:

The dimensions of the on-going battle, as defined in the President's speech ... make it incumbent on writers and artists to recognize the kinds of weapons needed for repulsing such acts of aggression ... They should produce the cultural means of kindling the fire of Jihad ... aborting the enemy's evil designs, and exposing the irony of history embodied in the Jews. The Jews had been chased out of European countries; they had been persecuted, their property confiscated, and made homeless. Then they came to Palestine so as to deal with its people the way they had been dealt with.

(Preface to the Arabic *The Jew of Malta*, 6)

#### **Turning to the Arabic translation at hand he says:**

This translation reveals the fact that the racial prejudice of the Jews, their Machiavellism, egotism and treachery are not newly acquired qualities. They have been characteristic of the Jews ever since the dawn of their history. These qualities had caused many nations before us to suffer, engendering hate for the Jews, sending them into exile and rendering them homeless.

It is a historical fact that the Jews were many times expelled from England, and from other kingdoms of Western Europe. Some were readmitted towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, fleeing from the Spanish Inquisition. It was perhaps this re-admission and the recognition of their danger to society that inspired Marlowe and made him write this play as an admonition and a warning.

(7-8)

This is the mood in which the translation is made. Surely no one may claim that the Arabic translator, the Syrian writer Nasr Abdul-Rahman, found it easy to deal with the Jew in the play independently of the image of the Jew in his own day. That much is certain. The question is how far he could disentangle himself from his own history in order to deal faithfully with a play that uses historical facts in order to transcend them and so write an ahistorical play. How far does his own position vis-à-vis the arising ‘Jewish problem’ in the Arab homeland impinge on his Arabic translation, if it does in fact impinge on it? Can the translator successfully combine the Arab with the foreign images of the Jew so as to achieve the target outlined by the editor in the Preface? What are the signs of such manipulation, even as justified in terms of interpretation? The details of what has been termed ‘subtlety’ and ‘subterfuge’ will be seen more clearly in the comparison with Enani Arabic translation, published more than half a century later and in different historical circumstances. However, there is a need first to establish important facts about the 1967 text.

To begin with, the 1967 Arabic version is as accurate as may be expected of a text translated in a hurry, so as to appear topical, and from an old edition of the source text, lacking the apparatus criticus to be found in every edition of the play since 1969. Though revised by Professor Zakhir Ghobrial, an eminent scholar, poet and translator, the style remains the translator’s own. The editor says that Ghobrial “corrected some mistakes and substituted lucid readings for some vague expressions in the text” (8), but Ghobrial’s notable contribution is the scholarly introduction in which he declares that the English source text is “a

sad force, wherein sorrow and foolishness together prevail. Its ludicrous foolishness transcends the world of comedy, but it does inspire terror because of its affinities with the real world” (27). One can find no better characterization of the English text, but, of course, not the Arabic prose version.

As a reviser he may have had a few words to say about the quality of the translation, usually commending it for one quality or another, but Professor Ghobrial says nothing. One can only guess that he confines his corrections to the more egregious cases of miscomprehension. As an experienced reviser, he observes the rule of every responsible reviser of a literary translation: never interfere with the translator’s style. This is certainly to his credit, as the critic may now assume that the Arabic text is the translator’s own work. Furthermore, one can establish the translation strategy adopted noting its characteristics as those of the translator-as-writer. Most important among these, for our purposes, is the tendency to ignore the tone of the speech, or not to recognize tonal variety. This is unfortunate, for the entire text of the play is made up of words uttered in different situations and the tone of every segment of speech is essential to its meaning. Neglecting the tone means sacrificing more crucial qualities of discourse, such as irony, equivocation, connotation, as well as the aesthetic value of conflicting or concordant tones in a given speech. A less significant feature, though important, is inadequate comprehension (or even miscomprehension) of the Elizabethan language used.

##### **5. Textual analysis of the Arabic Translations:**

“When the curtain rises”, in today’s parlance, we see Barabas sitting in his counting house, engaging in calculations, poring over a huge book, or standing on a blackboard on which he

chalks up some figure, while being surrounded with gold bullion and coins. He probably begins to say something to himself, inaudible to the audience, but the rest is heard, thus:

Barabas: So that of thus much that return was made  
And of the third part of the Persian ships  
There was the venture summed and  
satisfied.

(I.i. 1-3)

The literal Arabic prose rendering of the lines may be (understanding the content according to James R. Siemon's introduction to the play, 2009):

وإذن هذا مقدار العائد من هذه الصفقة.  
وثالث الأرباح العائدة من سفني الأخرى ببلاد الفرس  
محسوبة بدقة، وبها سددت تكاليف الرحلة.

The 1967 text gives the following translation of the three lines:

وهكذا تكشف لي أنني قد جنيت كثير [هكذا] من الأرباح  
ولقد أحصيت حصيلة المجازفة بثالث السفن الفارسية  
وراقنتي النتيجة.

Enani gives us, however, the following verified rendering:

وإذن هذا مقدار العائد من تلك الصفقة  
ولقد خصصت الثلث من الربح العائد من سفني الأخرى  
ببلاد الفرس لدفع تكاليف الرحلة وبأقصى دقة.

The metre obviously does not affect the accuracy of the meaning, nor does the casual rhyme (الصفقة / بدقة) thrown in

gratuitously, or perhaps for good measure. The earlier translation misconstrues the meaning of venture which survives today to mean a business enterprise (مشروع تجاري). It adds, however, the last sentence [the outcome pleased me] as though to give prominence to the egotism of the Jew—a light manipulative touch. This rendering conflates a possible misunderstanding and a most likely reflection of personal beliefs of the translator.

Later in the scene as Barabas receives news about his ships, one of his associates, a ‘merchant’, tells him that his colleagues wonder why Barabas is using such a ‘crazed’ ship (i.e. weak as almost not to be seaworthy) but Barabas says sarcastically that they are wise! Such an ironic reply to the men’s remark, namely “Tut! They are wise!” would be an exclamation such as “Oh! How wise they are!” (برحي! ما أعمق حكمتهم!) but the 1967 text gives us a statement which may be understood literally: (إنهم عقلاء). However, when the merchant leaves, Barabas feels worried about an argosy [a large merchant ship, especially of carrying valuable goods]. The translator renders it, however, as (السفينة الشراعية) as though there were steamers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Worried, Barabas thinks aloud saying “And yet I wonder at that argosy” (84). Whereupon another merchant comes in with the news that that argosy is sailing towards Malta (“doth ride in Malta road” (86). The translator gives us, however, the following version of these lines:

باراباس - ومع ذلك فإنني أعجب من تلك السفينة الشراعية.

(يدخل تاجر ثان)

التاجر - اعلم يا باراباس أن سفينتك ... ترسو الآن في مرفأ مالطة.

The lines are translated by Enani thus:

باراباس: لكن الشك يراودني في حال سفينتي الكبرى.

(يدخل تاجر ثان)

التاجر: اعلم يا باراباس ... أن سفينتك الكبرى

مبحرة قاصدة مالطة.

The first translation misconstrues the Elizabethan expression about a ship “rising in the road”, that is “sailing towards”, he seems to think that it means “lying in the road” means, i.e. “the ship is anchored”. Thus, misrepresentation may just take place as a result of misunderstanding of idiomatic English or simple linguistic errors. However, such miscomprehension and misrepresentation can unwittingly create an image that stands in direct contradiction to the source text layers of meaning. Absence of a clear picture of the content and its affiliated connotation leaves the stage open to interference on the part of the translator who will then try to form the target text according to personal and cultural beliefs and sensibilities as can be made clear by critical discourse analysis.

The misrepresentation may be a subtle manipulation not a result of misunderstanding. A case of clear manipulation of the text makes Barabas slander Christians while the text is almost complimentary:

Barabas: Give us a peaceful rule, make Christians  
kings,

That thirst so much for principality.

(133-4)

Enani's version says:

آتونا حكماً سلمياً وملوكاً بالحق مسيحية



حتى إن كانت تتعطش للسلطة أيّ تعطش!

But the 1967 text reads:

امنحنا حكمًا سلميًا واجعل المسيحيين الذين يتعطشون  
كثيرًا إلى الرئاسة ملوكًا.

If someone objects to Enani's version as based on interpretation, namely the addition of the word 'true' to the epithet "Christian", the reply could be that this interpretation represents the intended meaning as Craik says (1979: 35). His argument is that all actors playing Barabas in the post-war world stressed the word 'Christians' and the changed intonation meant the existence of 'real' or 'true'.

This is different from the translator manipulating the text to further blacken the image of the Jew. Concluding his soliloquy at the end of Act I, Barabas says:

Barabas: How'er the world go, I'll make sure for  
one,

And seek in time to intercept the worst,  
Warily guarding that which I've got.

*Ego mihimet sum simper proximus.*

Why let'em enter, let'em take the town.

(I.i. 185-9)

This is what the translation says:

ولكن كيفما كان الأمر فسوف أحقق المكاسب لنفسي، وسأنشد

في الوقت المناسب صد الأذى عن نفسي، وذلك بحراسة ما أملك

بحرص

إنني أهتم بنفسي أكثر من اهتمامي بأي شيء آخر. ألا فليدخلوا

...

وليحتلوا المدينة.

But Enani's version reads:

لكن مهما يحدث .. بالقطع سأحامي ذاتي

وأبادر بنجاتي قبل وقوع الطامة !

وسأحرص كل الحرص على ما أملك

فأنا أقرب خلق الله إلى نفسي دوماً

وإذن دعهم يقتحموا البلد ويستولوا بالفعل عليها.

The translator's addition of the clause "make gains for myself" confirms the stereotypical image of the Jew—a clear case of manipulation. The phrase "in time to" does not mean 'in due course' (at the right juncture, when the time is ripe or in the fullness of time); it means in this context 'to anticipate' or to be there before the time required, or before something happens, hence the Arabic structure (أبادر ... قبل). The translation of the Latin wise saying makes the matters worse: the Latin speaks of 'nearness' (proximus) not of interest or care (اهتمام أو انشغال). The implication is that self-love is not a sin, which is hinted at in the prologue of the play by the ghost of Machevill (Machiavelli). The question of interpreting what is human and what is not lies at the heart of such declarations. Indeed the question of interpretation, often regarded as justifying shifts in rendering elliptical speech, may be invoked in cases of perceived manipulation. The 1967 translator seems over-sensitive to this, normally assuming an ostensible neutrality but resorting to interpretation when intent on

blackening the image of the Jew. However, many such neutral utterances, as well as renderings based on interpretation, are the result of misunderstanding the text, pure and simple. In the second part of Act I, scene I, when the three Jews visit Barabas (the text says: Barabas: “but who comes here?” and the stage directions say: “*Enter THREE JEWS*”). The translator adds a stage direction of his own saying: “*The scene changes to a street*”. This is obviously added to justify his translation of the Barabas’ line “Why flock you thus to me in multitudes?” (143) as:

باراباس : ... لماذا تتجهون نحوي زرافات؟

However, as the Jews are visiting him, the meaning should be

باراباس : ... ماذا جمعكم عندي في هذا الحشد ؟ [Enani]

When the third Jew commends Barabas on his wisdom, he uses an apparent declarative statement with the effect of an exclamation. The translator here is faced with a choice: should he or she be more bound by the context than individual words, thereby seeking more illocution than locution? The following lines conclude the conversation between Barabas and the three Jews: Barabas suggests that the Turkish fleet is on its way to Venice, whereupon we hear:

Jew 3 : And very wisely said, it may be so !

Jew 2 : But there's a meeting in the senate-houses

And all the Jews in Malta must be there.

Barabas: Umh; all the Jews in Malta must be there ?

Ay, like enough, why then let every man

Provide him, and be there for fashion-  
sake.

If any thing shall there concern our state  
Assure yourselves I'll look (unto myself).

Jew 1 : I know you will, well brethren let us  
go.

(I.i. 165-172)

This is how the 1967 translator renders the lines:

*اليهودي الثالث* : في هذا القول حكمة كبيرة. ربما يكون الأمر  
كذلك.

*اليهودي الثاني* : ثمة اجتماع في دار مجلس الشورى وعلى كل

يهود مالطة أن يكونوا هناك

*باراباس* : آه. أيجب أن يكون كل يهود مالطة هناك؟ نعم

.. ذلك أمر محتمل. فليذهب إذن كل رجل

وكونوا هناك حتى نحافظ على الناحية الشكلية.

وإذا طرأ ما يمس كياننا فاطمئنوا إلى أنني سأرعى

(على انفراد) مصلحتي.

*اليهودي الأول* : أعرف أنك ستفعل ذلك .. حسنًا أيها الأشقاء فلنذهب

...

The Arabic version looks faithful enough to the source text, with the 73 English words translated into 60 odd words. The main ideas are there, or what Enani calls the 'skeletal sense' (cf. *On Translating Style*, 2020). Individual errors or inaccuracies are hardly visible: perhaps only rendering 'our state' (حالتنا) as (كياننا) (our entity) and the all-important manipulation, designed to

degrade the character of the Jew, by translating “unto myself”, that is (نفسى / حالى) into (مصلحتى) that is, my personal interests. There is perhaps also the mistranslation of “know” in this context as (يعرف) when it should mean (يعلم) especially (يعلم علم اليقين) hence to be certain (واثق). The weaknesses of the lines will be apparent when compared with the 2020 verse version:

**اليهودي ٣** : ما أرفع حكمتكم ! قد يصدق هذا الرأي.

**اليهودي ٢** : لكن الاجتماع قائم في مجلس الشيوخ

وينبغي حضوره على اليهود كلهم في مالطة

**باراباس** : ينبغي حضوره على اليهود كلهم في مالطة؟

فعالاً ! صحيح ! فليمض كل شخص نحو ذاك

الاجتماع

للحضور شكلياً. فإن رأى شيئاً يمسه معشر

اليهود

تقوا جميعاً أنني سأفحص الأمور (في الذي

يخصني)

**اليهودي ١** : بل نحن واثقون. هيا إذن نمضي يا أيها

الإخوة.

Apart from a few instances of explicitation, such as changing ‘it’ to (هذا الرأي) and ‘us’ to (معشر اليهود) and ‘myself’ into (الذي يخصني), the verse rendering is equally accurate, with hardly any significant accretions—it is incidentally precisely 60 words long. What other differences are there which tip the balance in

favour of the verse translation? It is the cohesion achieved, amazingly, by omitting less of the source text, if anything is actually omitted. The earlier version omits 'but' from the beginning of line 166, as the translator is deluded by the indefinite article. That article may have made him think that that line contains fresh information to be conveyed to Barabas, but the first Jew had in fact told him about it in line 147. The 'but' should not therefore be omitted and the indefinite article be replaced by the definite article. Line 166 is therefore a reminder of what the first Jew had said, with the only fresh information added is that concerning the need for the Jews to attend that meeting. Hence the anaphora in the reaction of Barabas: he repeats that information beginning with the same word as the second Jew's line, but with the intonation of a question. The verse rendering ensures the cohesion by adding the cohesion marker (بل) in the last line: it is a connective article required by the syntax: it links (be assured) with 'I know' (بل نحن واثقون → تقوا جميعاً) being a repetition that seals the cohesion. The word in the earlier translation (فاطمئنا) is not wrong, but the cohesion would have required that the first Jew's answer be (بل نحن مطمئنون) not the lame (أعرف) which does not mean the same as 'know', as mentioned above (cf. Enani's *On Translating Arabic: A Cultural Approach*, 2000, and his *On Translating Style*, 2020), for the difference between (يعرف) and (يعلم) in versions of Arabic contexts). As in Shakespeare's English, the word 'Why' and 'what' are exclamatory. They are not expletives, though they usually express astonishment or mild surprise. Another Shakespearean favourite is 'soft' or 'soft you!' to mean 'I beg your pardon' or 'wait a little'. The early translation gives them as

(ماذا) and (لطفاً). In fact, these Levantine ‘politeness’ markers have been introduced into Egypt to mean ‘please’. So, when Calymath, the Turk, asks his colleague to be milder or more gentle in dealing with the Maltese government ‘chiefs’, he says:

Calymath: What ! Callapine ! a little courtesy !  
(I.ii. 23)

The early translation gives us:

كاليمات: ماذا (يا كلابين) ! قليلاً من اللطف.

The later version says:

كاليمات: عجباً لك يا كلابين ! فلننتطف معهم بعض الشيء!

And when Barabas advises Ferneze, the Maltese Governor, to pay tribute to the Turks, he says:

Barabas: Then good my lord, to keep your quiet  
still,  
Your Lordship will do well to let them have  
it.

(I.ii. 43-44)

The earlier translation gives the lines as:

باراباس: إنكم تحسنون صنعاً يا سيدي الطيب إذا أعطيتموهم الجزية  
وذلك إبقاءً على هدوء الأحوال

But the verse rendering says:

باراباس: وحفاظاً للسلم أيا مولاي الأكرم  
يجمل بمعاليتكم تقديم المال إليه

The obvious case of manipulation of the source text for the purpose of maintaining the stereotypical image of the Jew as a

usurer occurs when Barabas says he is not a soldier, to which the first knight replies:

Knight 1 : ... Thou art a merchant, and a moneyed man

(I.ii. 53)

Which the earlier translation gives as:

*الفارس الأول*: ... إنك تاجر ومراب كبير

But the later version says:

*الفارس ١*: ... فأنت تاجر وذو ثراء فاحش.

If it is said that the translator thought ‘moneyed’ was synonymous with money-lending (money-lenders are usurers) then the change would be blamed on miscomprehension. It is likely, however, that he knew the right meaning and deliberately brought in the idea of usury, which is flatly a case of manipulation.

## **6. Miscomprehension**

Other cases of discrepancy are due to miscomprehension. Ferneze, the Governor, has issued decrees to the effect that the money needed for the tribute be taken from the Jews, Barabas and the other. To begin with, the translator renders ‘money’ as (نقود) which refers to coins and banknotes, particularly gold and silver coins, but ‘money’ also includes property (ممتلكات) and therefore should be (مال). As the action of the play shows, the ‘money’ of the Jew includes his ‘goods’ (بضائع) and property (عقارات). Appalled by the decree, Barabas pretends not to grasp what is meant and screams: “How, my Lord, my money?” which the



earlier translator gives as (كيف يا سيدي؟ نقودي؟) while the verse translation reads (ماذا تعني يا مولاي بمالي؟)، and further on uses مال، instead of نقود in the earlier translation. This error is compounded, two lines later, with mistaking the expression “short of” for “in short” which changes the mood of the sentence from the probability of shortage to the certainty of “in few words, that is what is going to be done”—a subjunctive mood turned a declarative one. Mere linguistic analysis of the source text is the base on which the other various levels of meaning are to be established.

It has been argued earlier that one of the main critical approaches to a work of art consists in examining structure, texture and tone, as defined by the New Critics. Modern stylistics, in fact, also deals with these three aspects, though adding the possibility of the impact of ideology (primarily) on tone. Notwithstanding the fact that the analysis of the translated text deals with structure at the micro-level as with texture, it has been shown that the changes introduced by the translator of the target text may be the result of a certain ideological stand, and hence could be regarded as manipulation. Such changes may be apparently made at the micro-linguistic level, but they may reveal an implicit ideology, and a close reading can help in identifying the change of tone. The blackening of the image of the Jew by an Arabic translator harbouring no sympathy for the Jews may be thought to be ‘natural’ or ‘not unexpected’.

However, as all concerned with critical and linguistic approaches to translation seem to believe in the unity of form and content in a work of art, the form of the poem should be regarded as part of its overall ‘content’, which is understood to be its very

substance, as mentioned above. To be faithful in rendering a poem, the translator would normally wish to transmit its ‘formal’ aspects, such as rhyme and rhythm, as much as what it ‘says’, or its imagery. Opting for a translation in prose of a poem is, to begin with a crucial decision. It bespeaks the translator’s unwillingness to recognize the fact that it is verse. Enjoying the freedom of prose, the translator may change the structure of a speech at will, thinking that he or she is after nothing but the prose meaning. But as will be shown, the general structure and the particular syntax of the segments of the speech have a meaning: to disregard them is to risk losing an important part of the ‘meaning’. Consider the following exchange between Ferneze, the Governor of Malta, after having expropriated Barabas’s wealth, Barabas and the first knight:

*Ferneze* : Yet Barabas we will not banish thee,  
But here in Malta, where thou gott’st thy  
wealth,  
Live still; and if thou canst, get more.

*Barabas*: Christians, what or how can I multiply ?  
Of nought is nothing made

*I knight* : From nought at first thou cam’st to little  
wealth,  
From little unto more, from more to  
most;  
If your first curse fall heavy on thy head,  
And make thee poor and scorned of all  
the world,  
’Tis not our fault, but thy inherent sin.

(I.ii. 102-110)

The key words here are ‘get more’, ‘multiply’ and ‘nought’; as the combined images in the lines of the three men in lines 104-108 work to establish the contrast between being and unbeing. It is at once an existential idea, and an ironic comment on the Biblical idea that ‘Being’ (الكون) was created out of nothing as opposed to the Aristotelian principle of denying chaos [nothingness as equal to formlessness]. Ferneze tries to alleviate Barabas’s shock of apparently ending with ‘nothing’ by suggesting that the Jew can create another wealth and multiply it. The rejoinder by Barabas that ‘nothing will come of nothing’ (cf. *King Lear*, I.i. 92) is refuted by the first knight who defends the Biblical idea; he elaborates the sense of ‘genesis’ which means an origin, or a first principle (preceded by nothing) “from nought at first”. Then comes the idea of multiplication (التكاثر) or Shakespeare’s “increase”.

Now the translator who grasps this leitmotif as extended over ten lines will note that there is no enjambment (run-on line), i.e. sentences occasionally ending in the middle of the line. From the beginning the idea of ‘increase’ is maintained, and the two instances of compound and complex sentences are divided among separate, though interconnected lines. The translator will also note that the metre is regular, consisting of five iambic feet in each line except the crucial “of nought is nothing made” which is an iambic trimeter (the others are pentameters). The regular rhythm is made into a framework for the point-counterpoint exchange in the argument. The contrast is sustained in the compound sentence by the coordinating conjunction ‘but’ (paratactic) and in the complex sentence by a spurious conditional structure (hypotactic). None of these features is transmitted in the prose rendering. Here it is:

فرنيزي : لن ننفيك يا باراباس. عش أبدًا هنا في مالطة حيث

جمعت ثروتك واجمع ثروة أخرى ما وسعك الجمع.

باراباس: أيها المسيحيون: ما الذي أستطيع جمعه وكيف؟ أنه لا

يمكن صنع شيء من لا شيء.

الفارس الأول: جمعت في بادئ الأمر ثروة صغيرة من لا شيء،

ثم تدرجت من القليل إلى ما هو أكثر، ثم إلى الأكثر.

والآن إذا وقعت اللعنة التي حلت منذ القدم على اليهود

ثقيلة على رأسك، فجعلتك فقيرًا وممتهنًا أمام الناس

جميعًا، فليس ذلك خطأنا، وإنما هي خطيئتك الملازمة

لكم.

Apart from the obvious manipulation through explicitation by adding (اليهود) in line 108, together with the rest of the sentence; and apart from the added (أبدًا) as a translation of still [still live: live still: ابق هنا في مالطة:], and the interpretation of ‘get’ and ‘got’ as (يجمع / جمع), which is, incidentally idiomatic as it occurs in the Quran (الذي جمع مالاً وعدده) but does not suit the context, the use of the spuriously conditional (إذا إن تكن تقع الآن → وقعت), the five lines of the knight consist of one regular sentence (20 words) followed by a single complex but a spurious ‘if’ structure consisting of 27 words. The problem with translating the regular conditional clause is that it posits a protasis (جملة الشرط); which refers to something that may happen, while the spurious conditional refers to something that has happened. So, (إذا وقعت) means in fact (الآن وقد

(إن تكن قد وقعت الآن) and therefore should be translated as (وقعت). Finally “thy inherent sin” is addressed to Barabas, as ‘thy’ is singular, not plural as in the 1967 translation; and inherent (أصيلة / ) is different from ‘immanent’ (الملازمة لك). No poetic licence may be invoked in justification of these changes as the translation is in prose. Now let us look at the verse rendering:

فرنيز : لكننا لن ننفيك أيا باراباس.

بل فابق هنا في مالطة .. حيث جمعت الثروة

فيضيفُ إلى مخزون الماء لديه صفة الوفر

باراباس: يا نصارى ما الذي أقدر أن أُرَبِّي؟ كيف أُرَبِّي عمدًا.

ليس يأتي أي شيء من عدم!

الفارس ١ : من عدم في أول أمرك مونت قليلاً من مال

وقليلك صار كثيرًا .. وكثيرك صار الأكثر

إن كانت لعنتكم في الماضي تثقل رأسك

بل تجعلك فقيرًا محتقرًا في شتى أرجاء الأرض

فلا ذنب لنا فيها .. بل تلك خطيئتك المستأصلة.

The ten lines of the Arabic version happen to correspond to the ten English lines, though this formal correspondence should not count for much, for, in the final analysis, what should count is the balance is the leitmotif between ‘being’ and ‘nothingness’. The idea that something can be made out of nothing, as presented by Ferneze, is of Biblical provenance, as has been noted, and consists of three sentences, with each built on an operative verb. Although the idiomatic verbs used to refer to the acquisition of wealth assume that in terms of ‘being’ man is a constant and

money is a variable; that is to say, the existence of man can determine the existence or otherwise of money, Barabas seems to refuse this “Christian” argument, believing that money can only grow from money. He thereby posits money as a constant. His philosophic thought, built up of a pentameter and a trimeter, is reflected in the changed Arabic meter, and the triple structure of his reply in verse, with two verbs in the present tense; the first (أُرْبِي) means to ‘increase’ (hence الربا, i.e. usury) is repeated, bringing the idea of Nothingness (العدم). The second gives us the proverbial (ليس يأتي أي شيء من عدم).

The all-important concept of nothingness, with which Barabas’s line ends, begins the next line at the beginning of the Knight’s reply. This is a rhetorical device called ‘anadiplosis’, and is, apart from its aesthetic value, a cohesive device. As is well known, the Arabic word (عدم) is a lemma for many Arabic words meaning utter poverty. The word (معدم) is one; and, as in the case of Barabas money can have an existential value, the repetition in three lines acquires added significance.

It may be argued that the decision to deprive Barabas of any ability to use verse is in effect part of the manipulation which helps the translator to ensure the prosaic character of Barabas as Jew. The use of prose in Act I may be thought to be ‘passable’ in so far as that Act has the function of building up the initial situation which is based on action. It mainly consists of the clash of forces, which is described as conflict in drama. It is the longest, exceeding 600 lines, and contains lengthy arguments in defence of, and against, the expropriation of the Jew’s possessions, as well as his reaction to such a measure, perceived as unfair.

Sometimes the 1967 translator adds certain words as part of his manipulation of the image of the Jew. Barabas advises his daughters to dissemble, that is, to pretend to be a sinful Christian wanting to expiate her sins by becoming a nun in I.ii. 290-3. His lines, cited and analysed above, are explained by Siemon thus: Barabas says “It’s no worse to deceive deliberately than to begin with true intentions and subsequently turn to hypocrisy” (32). Here are the four lines again:

*Barabas*: As good dissemble that thou never  
mean'st

As first mean truth and then dissemble it;  
A counterfeit profession is better  
Than unseen hypocrisy.

Enani’s version follows the agreed sense in the foreign editions, but the earlier translator rendered the lines:

*باراباس*: من يبدأ بتصنعه فيقول كلامًا لا يعنيه

ليس أحط من البادئ بالصدق ليكذب بعده

فالزيف المكشوف الواضح أفضل من

أي نفاق خاف غير صريح. [Enani]

*باراباس*: أتقني التصنع إلى حد يبدو معه أنك لم تتصنعي قط.

تظاهري بالإيمان أولاً، ثم تبني مظاهر هذا الإيمان.

إن الزيف السافر أفضل من النفاق المقنع. [1967]

Cases of miscomprehension abound in the play but as this study is more concerned with the manipulation of the text in translation so as to confirm and deepen the abhorrent character of

the Jew no more will be given. The idea of ‘faith’ (الإيمان) does not occur in Barabas’s words: his main point is for Abigail to pretend to be a culpable soul needing religious guidance by joining the nunnery – which she actually does. Barabas’s reference to dissembling does not touch the reality of belief a disbelief, but is confined only to ‘truth’ and ‘lying’. Later in the scene, the translator changes Barabas’s word ‘heresy’ (تجديف في الدين or هرطقة) into (كفر) (unbelief, infidelity). It is true that the two words have a common element, but in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a ‘miscreant’ was used to mean unbeliever, which any act of deviation from the tenets of one’s faith would be described either as a heresy or as a sign of apostasy, while today a miscreant could be a misbeliever, a heretic or infidel. Any recanting of one’s faith is described as reneging, recreance or apostasy. Jews and Christians in the play rarely discuss theological questions; even Friar Jacomo would only call Barabas “thou man of little faith” (I.ii. 338).

## **7. Conclusion**

The image of the Jew, in two translations of *The Jew of Malta* into Arabic, has noticeably changed from the more subjective, manipulative handling in 1967, to the more objective, sober rendering of the 2020 text.

The cultural, historical and political backgrounds of the late 1960s in Egypt and Syria, in addition to the individual literary capabilities and sensibilities of the earlier translator, have palpably influenced the earlier translation, which produced a mediocre target text with a starkly unfavourable image of the Jew, recreating a popular stereotype that was prevalent at the time. This, compounded by miscomprehension of different aspect of the



source text, has led to other misrepresentation of the content and form of the original text.

The immensely different cultural, historical and political backgrounds of the turn of the twentieth into the twenty-first century, in addition the individual literary capabilities and sensibilities of the later translator, have as well influenced the later translation. However, this time, the later translation produces more faithful rendering which keeps the source text intentions and layers of meaning intact. It, furthermore, recreates a literary work that can be considered a creative work in its own right, i.e., it delivers aesthetic value in addition to conveying the original content and purpose. This proves the need for such retranslations. The 2020 retranslation adheres more to the source text, and attempts to ignore the cultural and political baggage of the target culture. However, this does not mean that it simply aims at foreignization (as against domestication) since there is no foreign atmosphere that can be detected in the end product. It sounds and tastes as if it was originally authored in Arabic.

Retranslations of a dramatic work can thus change the image presented in older translations, and rectify previous images of foreign authors and their oeuvres as well. It is an endeavour that adds to a better perception of other cultures and consequently even of one's own culture since understanding of self is enriched by better understanding of the other.

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## صورة اليهودي في ترجمات عربية لمسرحية يهودي مالطا

### الملخص:

تستكشف هذه الدراسة صورة اليهودي كما تبنت في ترجمتين عربيتين لإحدى مسرحيات العصر الإليزابيثي في إنجلترا، وهي مسرحية كريستوفر مارلو "يهودي مالطا". وتستمد الدراسة إلهامها من مفاهيم نظرية أساسية أتاحتها دراسات الترجمة، وخاصة نظرية "تعدد النُظْم" (الأنساق المتعددة)، وتحليل الخطاب، والتداولية، كي توضح علاقة هذه المفاهيم بترجمة الأعمال الدرامية، وخاصة كيف تشكلت صورة اليهودي في ترجمة وإعادة ترجمة إلى اللغة العربية. وتثبت الدراسة تأثير عناصر الخلفية الثقافية والسياسية والتاريخية في طريقة نقل المترجم للنص من المصدر إلى الهدف. كما تحاول الدراسة أن تجري تحليلاً أدبياً متعمقاً للنصوص قيد الدراسة بهدف التوصل إلى كيفية تلاعب النص المترجم، عن قصد أو سهواً وخطأً، بالنص الهدف بحيث يخلق صورة معينة قد لا تكون تلك التي كان يرمي إليها مؤلف النص المصدر. وتحاول الدراسة أن تحيب على سؤال عما إذا كانت الخلفيات الأيديولوجية والثقافية تتدخل في الترجمة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** صورة اليهودي، مسرحية مارلو "يهودي مالطا"، دراسات الترجمة، نظرية تعدد النُظْم، مقارنة تحليلية، تلاعب، ترجمات عربية، إعادة ترجمات، التداولية.