



Ideological Constraints in Dubbing The Simpsons into Arabic

by Rashid Yahiaoui

Translators' partiality, originality and respect for equivalence are issues that have been brought up for discussion and debate on many occasions. In an attempt to understand the involvement of translators in the translation process and to highlight the need to analyse their role, Bassnett (1996: 22) argues that, "once considered a subservient, transparent filter through which a text could and should pass without adulteration, the translation can now be seen as a process in which intervention is crucial".

The role played by ideology in the translation process can be better appreciated by understanding the complexity of the latter and recognising that it is not as simple as substituting one linguistic code by another. Lefevere (1992: 39) states that "on every level of the translation process, it can be shown that, if linguistic considerations enter into conflict with considerations of an ideological and/or poetological nature the latter tend to win out".

Additionally, Penrod (1993: 39) argues that translators are regularly supposed to "take positions" when translating and therefore must be very alert to the nature of the position they choose. Fawcett (1998: 107) takes it a step further by maintaining that the dispute between "literal" versus "free" translation strategies in particular, among others, tends to be ideologically provoked.



1. TRANSLATION AND IDEOLOGY

In its broadest sense, ideology is, as Seliger (1976: 14) defines it, “sets of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify ends and means of organised social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order”. In this sense, ideology covers a vast array of aspects: political, social, epistemological, ethical and religious. When we understand ideology as a set of convictions aimed at some practical action, we usually disregard the aspects of individual ideology to the advantage of the so-called collective ideologies, those around which political and social movements gravitate.

Although there is no single definition of ideology which could encompass these various conceptualisations, ‘ideology’ is used in this study to mean “the intellectual dimension of culture. It justifies its sets of beliefs, values and norms”, as Facchini and Melki (2011: 1) argue. This means that people follow, and abide by, certain socio-cultural norms because of the justification with which this dimension provides them. This encompasses, for example, habits like food and drink (why certain people do not eat or drink certain items), the use of rude language, nudity, taboos and the like.

What is particularly relevant to this study is the role of the translation process, under ideological and cultural pressures, in shaping different agents in charge of the translation, and how these agents contribute to shaping the world around them as a result. It is apparent that we are influenced by one form of ideology or another, and consequently, we are subject to the ever-changing external cultural and political currents and trends that shape public opinion and seek to bias our view of the world.

2. DUBBING AS A FORM OF AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

Audiovisual translation (AVT) is one of the many terms describing the interlingual transfer of texts that are expressed through various semiotic channels concurrently: image and sound. While AVT is descriptive, and generally refers to the translation of films and programmes that are produced for TV, cinema, video and DVD, Yunxing (1998: 151) suggests film dialogue translation as a different alternative since “it is only the film dialogue that can be altered or re-encoded”.

According to Luyken *et al.* (1991: 11), audiovisual language transfer refers to the process that renders a film or a TV programme understandable to a target audience for whom the source language of the original is unknown. Some scholars like Hay (1998) and Whitman-Linsen (1992) incorporate theatre plays and operas within AVT. However, this study adopts Luyken’s definition. Simply stated, dubbing is a mode of AVT which:

consists of replacing the original track of a film’s (or any audiovisual text) source language dialogues with another track on which translated dialogues have been recorded in the target language. The remaining tracks are left untouched (the



soundtrack – including both music and special effects – and the images)”.
(Chaume 2012: 1)

Dubbing aims to lure viewers into believing that they are experiencing the original production in their mother tongue without losing any of the characteristics of the original. According to Shochat and Stam (1985: 49), when faced with dubbing, the audiences “repress all awareness of the possibility of an incorrect translation” and in fact, they “forget that there has been any translation at all”. Dries (1995: 9) argues that a programme is well dubbed when the viewers are unaware that they are viewing a dubbed version.

In films and other audiovisual media, dubbing is the act of substituting the original dialogue with a different language in a way that maintains a correspondence between the dialogue and the film’s visual elements, mainly lip movements. Dubbing aims to make the new dialogue seem as if spoken by the original actors on screen in an attempt to optimise viewers’ experience of foreign productions.

3. DUBBING AS AN IDEAL CONDUIT OF IDEOLOGICAL MANIPULATION

Dubbing became popular in some nations because of protectionism, nationalism and censorship, as is the case of the Arab countries. In fascist Germany, Italy and Spain, the power figures were in favour of promoting the domestic language, safeguarding the national film industry, and more importantly fully controlling what was being said on the screens (Danan 1991; Gutiérrez Lanza 1997). Undoubtedly, dubbing makes it easy to conceal utterances considered inappropriate for the target audience. This is in contrast to subtitling, particularly when viewers understand the source language. When freedom of speech is favoured and there is enough reason to suspect that those in power may want to repress unfavourable comments made on screen, subtitling becomes the best tool to preserve the viewers’ right to know.

The awareness of media influence in spreading ideology is prevalent among politicians and authoritarian social classes. Ballester-Casado (2001) points out that US films produced between 1928 and 1948 were viewed as tools of imperialism with which Hollywood imposed its genres as well as its ideological and aesthetic models on the Spanish audience, thus establishing a given ideological environment. In Italy and Germany, for instance, the post-war film industry was based on the legacy of the preceding fascist governments, as Danan (1991) accounts. Consequently, and in order to prevent the audience from accessing foreign ideologies portrayed in alien audiovisual materials, censorship practices were rigorously imposed in some countries. Dubbing was the evident choice for translation since the voicetrack could be revoiced to serve the state’s ideology and, in some countries, it was the only allowed mode of AVT. In Italy, for example, Mussolini banned the import of any non-dubbed versions of audiovisual material. Similarly, in Spain, Franco preferred dubbing and it was also methodically encouraged in Hitler’s Germany allegedly because it reduced the number of unemployed actors (Danan 1991: 611).



Dubbing frequently resulted from an explicit government policy to promote national identity through encouraging a national language. Having a single standardised national language and achieving political unity were some of the goals of these countries' governments, hence, stringent language policies were established and minorities were not allowed to speak their own languages or dialects. For example, a legislation decree passed in Spain in 1942 prevented the screening of films in languages other than Spanish, which was advantageous to dubbing being selected as the only choice for AVT (Ballester-Casado 2001). France also achieved political and cultural centralisation by encouraging the use of French, safeguarding the purity of the language and promoting its world influence (Danan 1991: 612). In the Arab world, there is a growing tendency to use only modern standard Arabic (MSA) in AVT. Some, as in the Gulf, are opposed to the dominance of the Egyptian vernacular and seem to have decided to put an end to it by, on one hand, switching to the Levant vernacular and, on the other hand, setting stringent rules on state-owned TV channels to use only MSA.

The choice of dubbing as a mode of AVT is not solely driven by the aforementioned political motivations; cultural and ideological factors also contribute to the choice of such a mode of translation. The target culture's traditions, religious inclinations and beliefs of the population determine what is acceptable and appropriate and what is not, especially when the audiovisual material comes from a source culture that is very different from the target one, in which case the translator and/or other agents decide which of the cultures would take precedence (Agost 2004: 69). It is, therefore, safe to argue that the role of the translator is not simply to translate a text for a new audience, but rather to know the foreign culture and to intervene in ways as to make it acceptable to the target audience.

In its essence, dubbing can be seen as the culprit in translation manipulation, since it aims to influence the target audience in just the same way as the source material affects the source audience. This can only be realised through the intervention of the translator/agents, particularly when they understand their role in the process as a way of minimising cultural differences between the two cultures. This intervention can, of course, render the final translation product very different from the original. Along these lines, Ascheid (1997: 33) considers that, in dubbing, issues such as "authenticity and originality" are meaningless as the target text of the dubbed production is "a new and fundamentally recontextualized" version of the original. The original source text becomes a mere "blueprint, which shifts its status from that of a finished and culturally specific text to that of a transcultural denationalized raw material, which is to be reinscribed into a new culture context" (ibid). Within the same context, Capanaga *et al.* (1996: 228) describe dubbing as a "betrayal of the original", while Salmon Kovarski (1996: 256) refers to dubbing as a conscious manipulation. Nonetheless, there is no consensus yet regarding the limits at which translators'/agents' interference should stop, thus, in the words of Zabalbeascoa (1996: 235), AVT will always remain as "a necessary evil".



4. THE SIMPSONS AS A CASE STUDY

The Simpsons is a TV animated sitcom created by Matt Groening with massive worldwide popularity and, as Cantor (2001: 70) argues, it “offers one of the most important images of the family in contemporary American culture, and in particular an image of the nuclear family”. The show depicts the multifaceted American modern society in an unprecedented manner. FOX, the TV network that produced the show, managed to shrink the entire US society in a small town called Springfield. This was only possible by resorting to a large number of characters representing different aspects of the US way of life. Indeed, very few aspects have been spared the satiric grilling of *The Simpsons*, which has even expanded to other nationalities in the world. One of *The Simpsons’* trademarks is its inclusion of all age groups, ethnicities and social classes and, in so doing, it brings together all societal opposites and ironies to form the frenzied and diversified Springfield. This is why *The Simpsons* is considered a unique genre, representing America’s modern hyperreality. It is often indicted for depicting the American family as dysfunctional, and thus, bringing the ‘real’ family to the foreground. It was clever and farsighted of the FOX network not to make *The Simpsons* a US show that gives an account of no other era but the postmodern one. The Simpson family members have no time or place and do not represent a certain type of the American family *per se*, but, as Björnsson (2006: 8) contends, “paradoxically they are every American family everywhere at any point in the postmodern era”.

The Simpsons is, in fact, a testimony to a postmodern fragmented society, which represents an array of cultures and subcultures by embracing the multifaceted diversity of the modern age. Perhaps, for this particular reason, this unique brand of animation has attracted the attention of a considerable number of researchers, who have dissected it from various angles (Armstrong 2004, 2006; Bowler 1996; Dore 2009; Martínez-Sierra 2006, 2008).

Although the Simpson family is the centre stage of the show, the evolution of the storyline predictably leads to the introduction of many different characters. This leads, in turn, to a shifting of the focus of the subject matter in any given episode to a point where the viewer is exposed to “fragments of characters from diverse parts of society that together form the multifarious picture of *Springfieldian* society”, as Björnsson (2006: 9) points out. The underlying message that is deeply buried under the satirical surface of the show is rebellion against all kinds of norms: social, cultural, political and religious. This is achieved by employing many supporting characters representing all aspects of authority, which is portrayed as “dangerously incompetent or criminally corrupt” (ibid.: 11).

This paper aims to unravel how much of such a satirical critique of society has made it to the Arab audience when MBC, a Saudi owned satellite television station that broadcasts from Dubai, took a ‘leap of faith’ and decided to dub and broadcast *The Simpsons* into Arabic as *Al-Shamshoon*. Aware of the show’s international prominence, the biggest challenge was to pick the right people for executing this job and the best talent from all over the Arab world was handpicked to give *The Simpsons* a greater chance for success. Amr Hosny was selected as the translator of the show,



while a very popular and prominent comedic force, Mohamed Henidi, was chosen by MBC to star as Omer Al-Shamshoon. The show was first aired in Ramadan of 2005 and although four complete seasons were dubbed, only 30 episodes were actually broadcast.

I transcribed the 52 episodes dubbed into Arabic and tabulated the original script, the Arabic translation, and the back translation for a contrastive analysis. I interviewed Hosny in 2010 to shed light on the constraints he faced translating such a pop-culture icon and having to report to the 'board of sheiks' of MBC. The data was very rich, especially in terms of censorship. As a helping tool for the analysis, I fed the script and interview data into MAXQDA, a computer programme developed specifically for qualitative data analysis, to classify, organise and analyse large amounts of unstructured text-based and/or multimedia data. It also helps in identifying trends and parameters and in cross-examining information. I organised my clusters and themes according to ideological, cultural and linguistic references extracted from corpus observation and participant interview.

5. IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES

Ideological references encompass a vast array of aspects; however, three categories have emerged from the extraction process: religion, extrinsic factors, and intrinsic factors. These categories are explored in more detail in the following sections, including the challenges they presented to the Arabic translator of *The Simpsons*.

5.1. Religious Issues

Out of a total of 358 examples extracted from the corpus, 143 (39%) were adapted or completely omitted.

The Simpsons, as a satirical sitcom, uses its animation format to neutralise viewers' perception of reality in order to present them with a critical look at societal practices and the world as a whole. The show plays on satire to soften any negative reaction from viewers, and thus often evades criticism. One of the most satirised aspects of society in *The Simpsons* is religion. "According to a study by John Heeren of California State University, at San Bernardino, religious content appears in nearly 70% of the show and 11% of *The Simpsons* episodes main theme is religious" (Dart 2001: 13). Many of the characters are practising Christians who attend the First Church of Springfield presided over by Reverend Lovejoy. Others belong to other religions or denominations like the Jewish Krusty the Clown, the Hindu Apu, the Catholic Archbishop McGee, and even some pagans like Moe, the tavern owner. Hardly any aspect of religion escapes ridicule in *The Simpsons*: Christianity, God, the Bible, the clergy, the church and the hereafter all receive attention.

Many viewers have criticised the show for its preposterous depiction of religion and morality in US society, which is best appreciated in George W. Bush's words: "We



need a nation closer to *The Waltons* than *The Simpsons*" (in Sohn 2000: online). However, others, such as Mullin (1999), defend the show's representation of religion and its figures in such a sardonic manner, claiming that no actual mischief is actually intended. What it is clear is that *The Simpsons* demonstrates that religion is an important part of people's lives and it succeeds in generating debate on controversial issues considered taboo.

The following excerpts are an illustration of how the values of a target culture can have such a great impact on, and interference with, the original discourse:

Source Text	Arabic Translation	Back Translation
1. Lovejoy: Oh, <i>Matthew</i> : yeah, right. Ned, the <i>Good Book</i> says a gentle answer turneth away wrath. (Episode 7F08)	أ. أ. حكم كتاب النصايح، أه صح صح. أنت عارف يا شافعي. الحكمه بتقول الكلمه الطيبه تلين الحجر.	Oh! A proverb from the "book of advice". Right! You know Shafiai, the proverb says "a good word softens a stone".
2. Marge: I know we didn't ask for this, Homer ... but doesn't the Bible say ... "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers ... that you do unto me". (8F21)	عارفه اننا ماخدناش إذناك يا عمر. بس الأخلاق بتقول، إننا نساعد أي واحد عنده أزمه، إذا كان ف أستطاعتنا	I know we didn't ask your opinion Omar. But <i>ethics</i> tell us to help anyone in crisis if we can.
3. Mr Burns: Oh, for the love of Peter. That's all anybody brought. (7G04)	يا ساتر يا رب. كل الناس جابولى جيلى.	Oh! Lord! Everyone brought me jelly.
4. Homer: Sure. It gets rid ... of the unpleasant aftertaste of church. (8F12)	طبعاً دى احسن حاجة تضيع التأثير السىء لقعدة البيت	Sure, this is the best thing for getting rid of the negative influence of staying home.
5. Flanders: All right. No Bible stories for you tonight. (8F16)	طيب، كفايه كده يا أستاذ. مش حاقرالك قصص تافهه قبل النوم	Ok, that's enough Mr I am not telling you silly stories before bed time.

Table 1: Examples of references to the Bible and the Church

The rendering of these excerpts into Arabic clearly indicates that the translator has opted to side with the Muslim audience, even though the Bible is recognised by every Muslim as a revelation by God to Jesus and their faith would be incomplete by denying its existence. The problem, however, lies in the fact that Muslims believe that the Bible, in its current format, has been manipulated and subverted, and therefore, it is not the original book revealed to Jesus (Quran: Surah 2, verse, 75). Consequently, its teachings are not to be taken as an authentic revelation from God and should not be propagated among Muslims.

As the back translation of the above examples demonstrates, references to the Bible, the Church, or direct quotes from the Bible have all been neutralised and replaced by expressions with no religious connotations. 'Matthew' has been rendered as حكم [proverb], the 'good Book' as كتاب النصايح [book of advice], the 'Bible' as الأخلاق



[ethics] and the 'Church' has become البيت [home]. Although the content of most of these examples would be morally acceptable to Muslims, the translator deemed it necessary to filter all references to Christianity in the target text, in compliance with MBC bosses whose instructions were clear on such matters, as indicated by the producer and the translator.

It is worth noting that, despite the fact that Muslims do not believe in the current format of the Bible, or the Torah for that matter, they do not condone any sacrilege of these Books or disrespect of either Jesus or Moses as they are instructed by their faith to believe in and revere all God's prophets and books.¹ Bodily depictions of prophets are not allowed, and the prohibition of broadcasting Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is a clear example.

In the 52 episodes analysed, 105 references to alcohol and pigs/pork, and their derivatives (beer, wine, champagne, pork chops and ham), have been found, of which seven are cited below:

Source Text	Arabic Translation	Back Translation
6. Moe: Take it easy, Homer. <i>I learned how to make other drinks at bartender's school. Gin and ... tonic? Do they mix. (8F08)</i>	ماتأخذش ف بالك. انا خريج لمون و عسل؟ معهد صناع المشروبات ينفعوا سوا؟	Don't worry! <i>I am a graduate of the Drinks Institute. Lemon and honey? Do they mix?</i>
7. Moe: For the next half hour, <i>beer's on the house. (8F19)</i>	النص ساعه الجايه الشعير على حسابي	The next half an hour, <i>barley beer</i> is on me.
8. Otto: "Alcohol increases your ability to drive". False? (8F21)	المكيفات تزيد القدره على القيادة. خطأ؟ دا كلام	" <i>drugs increase your ability to drive.</i> " False? Really?
9. Selma: It takes a ripe piece of cheese to catch the mouse. It's time to give away my love like <i>cheap wine. (7F15)</i>	طيب، صيد الفيران محتاج لجبنه قديمه حارمى أحلامى عن الحب زى الشيبش القديم	Ok, catching mice requires old cheese. I will abandon my dreams for love like <i>old slippers.</i>
10. Eddie: You got a <i>liquor license. (7F21)</i>	أنت، عندك رخصه بيع عصير يا كابتن	You! You have a <i>juice licence, captain?</i>
11. Homer: Good night, <i>my little pork chop. (8F14)</i>	تصبحى على خير يا روح قلب بابا	Good night <i>daddy's heart and soul.</i>
12. Herb: You sure love <i>pork chops. (7F16)</i>	أبوكم بيموت ف الريش الضانى	Your dad is crazy about <i>lamb chops.</i>

Table 2: Examples of references to food and drink

The final solution has been to substitute any reference to 'alcohol' with عصير [juice] and to 'pork' with الضانى [lamb], as they are both prohibited in Islam, even though in

¹ Prophet's Hadith (saying) No: 4, in Sahih Muslim, Book 1, Chapter 2.



the interview given by the translator, he mentioned that he had protested vehemently to MBC for not accepting his original suggestion of شعير [non-alcoholic malt beer].

There are instances where certain references are metaphorical, and thanks to the flexibility of the Egyptian Vernacular Arabic, the translator demonstrated his creative skills. When Lisa raises the question of whether her aunt Selma would ever get married (example 9), Marge asks Homer to play matchmaker to find a husband for her sister. He considers some of his acquaintances and finally decides on Barney, but Marge declines to ask her sister to go out with such a 'loser', thus putting an end to Selma's chance of ever finding love. Selma then declares that 'It's time to give away my love like cheap wine', which the translator has transferred as الشبشب القديم [old slippers] to express the worthlessness of something whilst avoiding the reference to alcohol.

Example 11 shows how much Homer loves pork chops, using it as a metaphor for endearment. Some cultures also resort to metaphorical phrases to express similar sentiments like the French *mon petit chou* [my little cabbage] and the Arabic ياروحي [my soul] or ياقرة عيني [apple of my eye], which are common expressions known by all speakers of the language. However, the expression coined by Homer is totally idiosyncratic and a similar new concept should have been created in Arabic, though the translator has preferred to resort to a common Arabic saying of endearment that all Arabs would understand: يا روح قلب بابا [daddy's heart and soul].

As already mentioned, references to alcohol are also problematic and this becomes inescapable in the series as Homer is constantly drinking 'Duff beer'. The translation strategy adopted is inconsistent as the translator uses شعير [barley beer] in some episodes, as in example 7, and then switches to عصير [juice] upon MBC's instructions. When other drinks are mentioned, and depending on the context, these are localised into non-alcoholic beverages, as is the case in example 6, where Moe's reference to 'gin and tonic' becomes the very popular لمون وعسل [lemon and honey], used mainly for treating cold and flu, although also consumed as a refreshing summer drink in some Arab countries.

Interestingly, example 8 shows a clear violation of the censorship instructions imposed by MBC. The translator has changed alcohol into the Arabic term المكيفات, which in MSA means 'air conditioning' but in Egyptian vernacular is 'drugs'; a duality in meaning that works in favour of the translator to please both the Egyptian audience and the rest of Arab viewers who may not know the connotation.

As mentioned earlier, religion, with its various references, forms a significant part of *The Simpsons'* ideology and philosophy. Pinsky (1999: 11) argues that "statistically speaking, there is more prayer on *The Simpsons* than any sitcom in broadcast history", and yet, despite this sense of religiosity, the show has attracted criticism from various religious organisations. According to Pinsky (2007), the Catholic Church has complained about jokes portraying the Catholic faith as when Bart asks his mother if they could 'go Catholic' in order to be able to have 'booze and communion wafers' in the episode "Lisa gets an A" (AABF03).

Bowler (1996: online) offers some examples illustrating why all Christian denominations have a bone to chew with the show, as they "manifest a certain tension



on the question of humour and religion” and assume that a devout Christian would never joke about religion. Other criticism, as Bowler (ibid.: online) claims, is targeted at the fact that “the humour of *The Simpsons* is difficult to get in its entirety” due to the complexity of modern day culture cum humour, which sees no harm in showing a foolish, drunken and non-practising father and a rude, non-conforming and blasphemous son leading their lives as a normal family.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of religion that touches all faiths is direct reference to God. Although Matt Groening (in Pinsky, 1999: online) claims that God is never the target of criticism, references to God are customary in most episodes and many could be seen as serious blasphemies, at least from the Muslims’ perspective. Examples in Table 3 are a clear indication of the use of the term ‘God’ in different contexts:

Source Text	Arabic Translation	Back Translation
13. Smithers: You’re my <i>god of generosity</i> . (7F22)	سيادتك.. إنت كرمك مغرقنا	Sir, <i>you are spoiling us</i> with your generosity.
14. Staff member: The voters see you as <i>godlike</i> . (7F01)	الناخبين دلوقتي شايفينك راجل مثالي	The voters see you as an <i>ideal man</i> .
15. Homer: Dear God, <i>give a bald guy a break</i> . Amen. (7F02)	يارب. حقق لي أمنيتي. أمين	God, <i>grant me my wish</i> . Amen.

Table 3: Examples of references to God

In examples 13 and 14, both Smithers and a staff member use the divine attribute to complement Mr Burns for being so generous and adored by voters. Needless to say, the use of ‘god’ with a lower case ‘g’, as it is spelt in the official scripts, to refer to an entity of high esteem and reverence other than God, can be very controversial. The use of any divine attributes out of context is a serious offence to monotheists. The translator is aware of this fact and chooses to render such references in *The Simpsons* in a manner that is acceptable to the Arab audience. Hence, ‘you’re my god of generosity’ becomes كرمك مغرقنا إنت [you are spoiling us with your generosity] and ‘godlike’ is rendered as راجل مثالي [ideal man] in a clear attempt to avoid risking any offence.

Example 15, could be seen as harmless if taken literally and with a non-sarcastic tone. However, Homer’s indignation and cynical tone could be interpreted as a sign of disrespect towards God and thus has to be rendered as a prayer, in an adequate and sincere tone: يارب حقق لي أمنيتي [God, grant me my wish].

5.2. Extrinsic Factors

The process of transferring audiovisual material in general, and *The Simpsons* in particular, into Arabic is considered a treacherous territory that needs to be treaded upon with utmost caution; a muscle flexing of various players: the translator, the patrons, i.e. MBC, the producer and the actors. Any external pressure on the translator



to alter, delete or subvert his initial approach to the original material is referred to as extrinsic factors. Sometimes, it is difficult to discern between what is imposed on the translator and his own ideology, as there may be a fine line between the two. To ascertain these issues, I contacted the translator via Skype and discussed these points. Based on this personal communication, the following samples are presented for analysis:

Source Text	Arabic Translation	Back Translation
16. Lisa: I believe everything you say, with your words and <i>Semitic good looks</i> . You seem to be Jewish. (7F19)	مصديقة كل اللي تقوله، بكلامك، وحركاتك وشكلك العربي النبيل شكلك كدا من أصل عربي	I believe everything you say, the way you talk, your movements and <i>noble Arab looks</i> , you seem to be of Arab origin.
17. Landlady: He moved out this morning. He took his <i>Copernicus costume</i> . (7F19)	أيوه، ساب الأوضه النهارده. حبروح مدرسة ثانية كان معاه زى فارس عربي	Yes, yes! He left the room today. He is joining another school. <i>He had an Arab knight costume</i> .
18. Marge: Dear Lord, if you spare this town...from becoming a smoking hole in the ground...I'll try to be a <i>better Christian</i> . I don't know what I can do. Um... oh, the next time there's a canned food drive...I'll give the poor something they'd actually like...instead of old lima beans and pumpkin mix. (8F04)	يارب، لو حفظت المدينه دى من انها تتحول لغبار نووى، حاصلى خمس مرات ف اليوم و لما تفضل لحمه م الغدا حاديه للفقرا عشان ينيسطوا بدل بواقى الفاصوليا و الخضار البايث اللي مالوش طعم	God! If you spare this town from becoming a nuclear dust, <i>I will pray five times a day</i> and when there is some leftover meat, I will give it to the poor to make them happy instead of the tasteless beans and vegetable from the night before.

Table 4: Examples of extrinsic factors

As mentioned before, MBC is a Saudi-owned satellite TV corporation that broadcasts from Dubai, and although outwardly it presents itself as a pioneering channel with a modern outlook, the sheikhs, according to the translator, have strict guidelines regarding religion and Arab nationalism. He recalls how he was instructed to disregard any mention of Jews, Christianity or Western values and replace them with local equivalents, as the examples in Table 4 illustrate. In the first excerpt, the terms 'Semitic good looks' and 'Jewish' have been changed into *شكلك عربي نبيل* [noble Arab looks] and *من أصل عربي* [Arab origin] respectively, despite the fact that Semitic [السامية] encompasses both Arabs and Jews, as they are related from an ethnological perspective.

Example 17 illustrates Arabs' protectionist attitude towards their cultural heritage and linguistic identity. A reference to a famous Western astronomer who promulgated the theory that the Earth and other planets in our solar system gravitate around the sun is seen as doing injustice to the illustrious scientific history of the



Arabs, the pioneers and fathers of many modern branches of science. Consequently, 'Copernicus costume' has been replaced with زي فارس عربي [an Arab knight costume] to celebrate the age-old tradition of Arab knighthood, which epitomises courage and generosity.

In example 18, the reference to being 'a better Christian' has been substituted, as is the case with all religious items, with the statement حاصلني خمس مرات ف اليوم [I will pray five times a day], foregrounding the number of prayers a Muslim must perform every day. It is interesting to note, however, that the translator has not use a more literal rendering like 'I will be a better Muslim', and has opted instead for an expression that reflects a stronger commitment on behalf of Mona, Marge's counterpart in Al Shamsnoon. Again, and according to the translator, this was imposed by the sheikhs from MBC.

5.3. Intrinsic Factors – Translator's Ideology

I will now examine the translator's own influence on the outcome of certain aspects of *The Simpsons* that he intentionally felt compelled to filter or subvert. These internal manipulative tendencies are referred to as intrinsic factors, which have the potential of portraying the translator's political, religious, nationalistic and cultural inner beliefs.

Out of a total of 350 examples of translations affected by intrinsic factors, only 21 (6%) were retained in a foreignised manner. The prevalent intrinsic factors extracted from the corpus fall within two categories: nationalistic stance and vilification of the foreign. Thus, while examples in Table 5 illustrate the translator's nationalistic and ardent love for his country (Egypt), Table 6 shows his loathing of the US as a role model and ideal for the rest of the world, and his attempts at excluding any foreign competition to Egypt, particularly if coming from other Arab countries:

Source Text	Arabic Translation	Back Translation
19. British commentator: Like the elegant Roman in <i>Judah Ben-Hur</i> ... these modern charioteers battle ferociously. No quarter given, none asked. The world has not seen the likes of this ... <i>since the French carried Lucky Lindy off on their shoulders</i> ... from <i>Le Bourget Field</i> . (8F07)	زي الأبطال الرومان في عصور الأستعباد، سيدور سباق اليوم بمنتهى الضراوة. ماحدث حيرحم ولا يطلب الرحمة العالم ماشافش بطوله زي دي من أيام المصريين ماشالوا مختار التنش على كتافهم ف ملعب النادي الأهلى	Like the Roman heroes from <i>the slavery days</i> . A ferocious race will take place. No mercy is asked nor granted. The world has not seen such championship <i>since the Egyptians carried Mukhtar Altitsh on their shoulders in Al Ahli stadium</i> .
20. Executive 3: Some <i>gypsy curse</i> . (7F16)	أ، جايز لعنة الفراعنه؟	Ah! May be the curse of the pharaohs?
21. Kent: You won't find the <i>freeloader</i> or Charlie Chaplin's little tramp here.	لأ، مش حتلاقى بينهم اسماعيل ياسين و لا أنور وجدى و لا حتى متشرد شارلى شابلن المسكين	No! You will not find <i>Ismail Yasin, Anwar Wujdy</i> among them or Charlie Chaplin's



<p>(7F07) 22. Mr Burns: Smithers, come here. I wanted to give you something ... and I know you wanted this photo ... of <i>Elvis and me</i>. (8F02)</p>	<p>سماوى، تعالى. عايزك. عايز ادبلك حاجة تفتكرنى بيها وأنا عارف انك كنت حاطط عنيك على صورتي مع عبد الحليم</p>	<p>poor tramp. Samawi, come here, I want to give you something to remember me by. I know you had your eyes on <i>my photo with Abdulhalim</i>.</p>
<p>23. Skinner: So, Patty, tell me, tell me more about <i>your trip to Egypt</i>. Patty: Nothing more to tell, really. <i>The Nile smells and the horseflies are huge</i>. (7F15)</p>	<p>أحكيلي أحكيلي أكثر عن رحلتك لأفريقيا قلت كل حاجة حقيقي. التماسيح ريحتها مش ولا بد و الغابات كلها دبان أكبر من راسك</p>	<p>Tell me; tell me about <i>your trip to Africa</i>. I told you everything. Really, The crocodiles stink and the forests were full of flies bigger than your head.</p>
<p>24. Marge: Well, <i>Selma hated Egypt too. A camel spit on her</i>. (7F15)</p>	<p>و سلمى كرهت افريقيا هي كمان زرافه عطست عليها</p>	<p>Salma hated <i>Africa too, a giraffe sneezed on her</i>.</p>

Table 5: Intrinsic factors prompted by a nationalistic tendency

In these examples, the translator's bias towards his country and culture is evident. Seldom does any reference to foreign elements in *The Simpsons* escape subversion and although the dubbed version is intended for the entire Arab world, the translator has made it look like it was 'made in America and assembled in Egypt'.

In example 19, Bart and his friend Martin decide to partake in a car-racing contest. The competition is fierce and the commentator is as excited as the racers. The historical event of Charles Lindbergh, the American pilot who landed at Le Bourget Field in Paris in 1927, successfully completing the first solo, nonstop transatlantic flight between New York and Paris, has been completely transformed into an Egyptian spineless story of a famous local footballer who played for the translator's favourite team, *Al-Ahli*. The translator has also done away with the reference to 'Judah Ben-Hur', the epic film that depicted the nativity of Jesus Christ and winner of 11 Academy awards in 1959, for Ben-Hur was a Jew during the Roman Empire devoted to freeing his people from the unjust rule of Rome, just as Moses did during the Pharaohs' time.

Examples 20, 21 and 22 further demonstrate the translator's bias to employing local cultural references at the expense of the entire Arab culture. Although he might be forgiven for rendering 'the gypsy curse' as لعنة الفراعنة [the curse of the pharaohs], as the expression has gained international recognition ever since the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen by Howard Carter, who died a mysterious death, the translator's choice of naming three famous Egyptian artists and singers, عبد اسماعيل ياسين وأنور وجدى [Abdulhalim, Ismail Yasin, Anwar Wujdy], is a clear indication of ulterior motives.

If further proof is needed to demonstrate the translator's influence on, and manipulation of, the original text, examples 23 and 24 are clear evidence. Contrary to the way in which the translator has dealt with 'positive' statements, substituting them with references to Egypt, asserts with 'negative' connotations have been deemed disparaging and have been shifted to represent others. Thus, 'Egypt', 'the Nile smells', and 'camels' have been changed to 'Africa', 'stinky crocodiles' and 'spitting giraffes',



respectively. The translator's avoidance of any references that could tarnish his country's image has led him to the ethically questionable solution of portraying an entire continent as a dumpster.

Table 6 illustrates the translator's perception of the US, which is depicted in a rather negative light:

Source Text	Arabic Translation	Back Translation
25. Kent: Good evening. <i>Did you know that thirty-four million American adults are obese?</i> That excess blubber could fill two-fifths of the Grand Canyon. (8F22)	مساء الخير. تعرفوا ان ف أمريكا 34 مليون بدين؟ لو حطيناهم على بعض ممكن يملوا حوالي نص آخدود الجراند كانيون.	Good evening, <i>did you know that in America there are 34 million obese?</i> If we put them all on top of each other, they may fill half the Grand Canyon.
26. Kent: <i>Americans have grown up with the image of the jolly fat man—Dom DeLuise, Alfred Hitchcock, and, of course Santa Claus.</i> (8F22)	الأمريكان بتشدهم فكره الرجل البدين الفخم مارلون براندو و ألفريد هنتشوك و طبعاً بابا نويل	<i>Americans are impressed by the jolly Fat Man, Marlon Brando, Alfred Hitchcock and, of course, Santa Claus.</i>
27. Merchant: I strongly advise you, do not purchase this. Behind every wish lurks grave misfortune. <i>I was once president of Algeria.</i> (8F22)	يا سيد، لازم انصحك بشده ماتشتر يهاش كل أمنيه وراها نحس مستخبي أنا نفسي كنت في يوم واحد مهم قوي	Mr! I must strongly advise you not to buy it. Every wish comes with a hidden jinx. <i>I myself used to be a very important man once.</i>

Table 6: Intrinsic factors prompted by vilifying and exclusion

Examples 25 and 26, which portray Americans as unhealthy, obese people, who are drawn to super-sized meals and monster cars, and are fascinated with large people, are translated literally. During the interview, the translator expressed his displeasure at people's admiration of the 'American civilisation' despite its decadent and decaying society. By translating literally these negative traits of Americans, the translator contributes to propagating to his audience that America is not what it is believed to be and the 'American dream' is nothing but a mirage.

In example 27, 'I was once president of Algeria' has been rendered as *أنا نفسي كنت في يوم واحد مهم قوي* [I myself used to be a very important man once], due to two main reasons. First, referring to heads of states and national figures is subject to strict guidelines imposed by Arab governments on the broadcasting industry. Second, the translator is a self-confessed football fanatic and, as it is well known in the Arab world, there is no love lost between Algeria and Egypt when it comes to football. In fact, the 2010 World Cup qualifying games between the two nations created a dangerous commotion that almost led to severing diplomatic ties. In the interview, the translator did not openly admit that excluding 'Algeria' from the translation was instigated by his resentment of the Algerian people, however, his smile, when answering, hinted that he 'had an axe to grind' with them.



As discussed earlier, *The Simpsons* is a sitcom with unparalleled satirisation of society at every level. Its central characters, mainly the Simpson family, have their own code of ethics almost alien to what most viewers are accustomed to. Everything is in the open and up for discussion and criticism—religion, sexuality, gambling, alcohol—and no issue seems to be taboo. Addressing an Arab society which lives by religious, cultural and, in some countries, tribal values, the translator has deliberately kept certain controversial issues in the dubbed version in an attempt to convey the message intended in the original. During our communication, he expressed his dismay and frustration at the difficulty of changing the old fashioned and inner-looking Arab society and stressed that he would challenge taboo at every given opportunity. The examples below represent his deliberate intervention:

Source Text	Arabic Translation	Back Translation
28. Lisa: So gambling makes a good thing even better? Homer: <i>That's right!</i> My God...it's like there's some kind of bond between us. (8F12)	يعنى الرهان بيخلى طبعاً الحاجة احلى مضبوط مدهش, حاسس ان فيه تفاهم رهيب بينا	So betting makes a good thing even better? <i>That's right!</i> My God...it's like there's some kind of bond between us.
29. Bart: Bad influence, <i>my butt!</i> Never listen to your mother. (8F04)	تأثير سىء ايه. كام مره اقولك ما تسمعش كلام مامتك	What bad influence? <i>How many times did I tell you not to listen to your mother?</i>
30. Homer: Wow, Flash Bailor came on to my wife! You've still got the magic, Marge. (7F05)	واو. جمال بيبو بيعاكس مراتى. لسه الرجالة بيتهللوا عليكى	Wow! <i>Jamal Bibo is flirting with my wife!</i> Men are still crazy about you.
31. Homer: I'm going to stand here...and <i>watch you smoke every one of those cigarettes.</i> Then maybe you'll learn. (8F03)	حاقف واتفرج عليك وانتي بتشرب السجاير دى كلها جايز تعرف غلطتك	I'm going to stand here...and <i>watch you smoke every one of those cigarettes.</i> Maybe you'll learn.

Table 7: Examples of some challenging issues

All excerpts above represent a taboo for almost any Arab. The first one in example 28 addresses the issue of gambling, which is forbidden in Islam and is considered an illegal practice in most Arab countries. Yet, the translator has decided to show this practice under a rather positive light. For him not to censor the reference to gambling raises a few questions, and to make it sound as if it is good and fun would be rather unethical by Arab society's standards. However, the translator argues that since gambling is available in many Arab countries, albeit not as prevalently as in the West or the Far East, the subject should be more openly discussed.

Example 29 deals with an issue dear to Muslims and Arabs alike, that of respecting and obeying parents. Although, it could be argued that an expression like 'Never listen to your mother', as Bart tells his friend Millhouse, when his mother has told him that Bart is a bad influence on him, is often uttered innocently, it can be



perceived by some in the Arab world as setting a bad moral and ethical example for children.

Example 30 represents one of the main taboo subjects for Arabs. Although it can be considered a compliment in Western societies if a man flirts with someone's wife or girlfriend, as this indicates their attractiveness, seduction and allure, it is an act of disrespect, transgression and ill morals in Arab society. Such an incident could lead to honour crimes and feuds between families and tribes. When the Simpson family goes to watch a baseball game, Bart asks one of the star players, Flash, to autograph a ball, but he refuses. Marge decides then to try her luck. Upon seeing her, Flash suggestively says, 'little lady, what can Flash do for you?', and writes on the ball the name and room number of the motel where he is staying. Later, Homer reads the inscription with enthusiasm and the translator has taken the risk to render this passage literally in an attempt to change the attitude of the audience and to challenge the powers that be in the AVT industry.

In the last example, Homer, to punish his son caught smoking, decides to make him smoke the whole packet, which, in a dysfunctional family, is considered normal behaviour. However, in a society that considers smoking in the presence of one's parents or elder relatives a major act of disrespect, Hosny has decided to challenge again the socio-cultural behaviour. When interviewed, he made refutes that this be a taboo topic as smoking is not against the teachings of Islam and in every family there is at least one smoker. He also added that too much of something makes it less appealing and, therefore, Homer has a valid point that could ultimately act as a deterrent for Arab viewers.

What is surprising here is the inconsistency of MBC in applying a standardised level of filtering and censorship. The translator, being liberal minded, seems to have surprisingly got away with many passages that are deemed to go against Islam and the Arab culture. Although the translator lives within a conservative Muslim society, which, in recent times, has been calling for a renewed moralistic approach to repair the damage that modern life style has inflicted on this generation's morals, many progressive, thought-provoking samples could be also detected in *Al Shamshoon*, as some of the examples have illustrated.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

TV representation of popular cultures is generally perceived as a carrier of values of the dominant countries, which work hard to spread their influence and grip on an increasingly more homogenised world, and *The Simpsons* is a clear example of this US modern cultural invasion of the world. To counter-argue its impact on the target culture, dubbing has been used in countries which are sensitive to foreign cultures and prone to influence or in those which strive to protect their linguistic and cultural identity. Dubbing is seen as the battleground for censorship, manipulation and subversion of the source material as the original soundtrack is completely removed and replaced by another that is considered to suit better the target audience.



Authorities and translators play a crucial role in this regard and a detailed analysis of the translation has the potential to uncover their intrinsic ideological and socio-cultural motives.

The dubbing of *The Simpsons* into Arabic has been subject to considerable ideologically motivated manipulation. Such intervention stems from the translator's own attitude towards the source text ideology, is imposed by outside forces such as the owners of the TV channel, or is in compliance with certain religious beliefs like Christianity, Judaism or the entity of God. While the translator's filtering of some controversial aspects, deemed contrary to Islamic teachings and cultural taboos of the Arab society, may be justifiable, many of his other interventions, instigated at times by his liberal outlook, nationalistic stance or aversion to the US, provide proof that the translator can, on occasions, have the upper hand in the type of message to be conveyed to the target audience.

REFERENCES

Agost, R., 2004, "Translation in Bilingual Contexts: Different Norms in Dubbing Translation", in P. Orero (ed.), *Topics in Audiovisual Translation*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp.63-82.

Armstrong, N., 2004, "Voicing The Simpsons from English into French. A Story of Variable Success", *Cahiers* 10(1), pp. 32-47.

Armstrong, N., 2006, "Translating The Simpsons: How Popular Is That", in N. Armstrong and F. M. Federici (eds), *Translating Voices, Translating Regions*, Aracne, Roma, pp. 203-215.

Ascheid, A., 1997, "Speaking Tongues: Voice Dubbing in the Cinema as Cultural Ventriloquism", *The Velvet Light Trap* 40, pp. 32-41.

Ballester-Casado, A., 2001, *Traducción y nacionalismo. La recepción del cine americano en España a través del doblaje (1928-1948)*, Comares, Granada.

Bassnett, S., 1996, "The Meek or the Mighty: Reappraising the Role of the Translator", in R. Álvarez and M. C. Vidal (eds.), *Translation, Power, Subversion*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, pp. 10-24.

Björnsson, B. E. F., 2006, *Postmodernism and The Simpsons. Intertextuality, Hyperreality and Critique of Metanarratives*, <[http://siguros.co.uk/media/simpsons/BA Thesis - Postmodernism and The Simpsons.pdf](http://siguros.co.uk/media/simpsons/BA_Thesis_-_Postmodernism_and_The_Simpsons.pdf)> (15 January 2016).

Bowler, G., 1996, "God and 'The Simpsons': The Religious Life of an Animated Sitcom", *The Simpsons Archive*, <<http://www.simpsonsarchive.com/other/papers/gb.paper.html>> (15 January 2016).

Cantor, P. A., 2001, *Gilligan Unbounded: Pop Culture in the Age of Globalisation*, Rowman and Littlefield, Maryland.

Capanaga, P., C. Navarro and M. J. Rodrigo, 1996, "Donne sull'orlo di una crisi di nervi: nel doppiaggio italiano lo spirito almodovariano è stato tradito?", in C. Heiss, and



R. M. Bollettieri Bosinelli (eds), *Traduzione multimediale per il cinema, la televisione e la scena*, CLUEB, Bologna, pp. 213-230.

Chaume, F., 2012, *Audiovisual Translation: Dubbing*, St Jerome, Manchester.

Danan, M., 1991, "Dubbing as an Expression of Nationalism", *Meta* 36(4), pp. 606-614.

Dart, J., 2001, "Simpsons Have Soul. TV's Most Religious Family?", *The Christian Century*, 31 January <<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2113>> (15 January 2016).

Dore, M., 2009, "Target Language Influences over Source Texts: A Novel Dubbing Approach in The Simpsons, First Series", in F. M. Federici (ed.), *Translating Regionalised Voices in Audiovisuals*, Aracne, Roma, pp. 136-156.

Dries, J., 1995, *Dubbing and Subtitling: Guidelines for Production and Distribution*, European Institute for the Media, Düsseldorf.

Facchini, F., and M. Melki, 2011, *Ideology and Cultural Change*, Association for the Study of Religion, Economics & Culture, ASREC Annual Meeting, April 7 – 10, 2011, Hyatt Regency, Crystal City, Washington DC.

Fawcett, P., 1998, "Ideology and Translation", in M. Baker (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Routledge, London, pp.106-111.

Gutiérrez Lanza, M. C., 1997, "Spanish Film Translation: Ideology, Censorship and the National Language", *American Translators Association Scholarly Monograph Series*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 35-45.

Hay, J., 1998, "Subtitling and Surtitling", in Y. Gambier (ed.), *Translating for the Media*, University of Turku, Turku, pp. 131-137.

Lefevre, A., 1992, *Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context*, Modern Language Association of America, New York.

Luyken, G. M., T. Herbst, J. Langham-Brown, H. Reid, and H. Spinhof, 1991, *Overcoming Language Barriers in Television*, European Institute for the Media, Manchester.

Martínez-Sierra, J. J., 2006, "Translating Audiovisual Humour: A Case Study", *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 13(4), pp. 289-296.

Martínez-Sierra, J. J., 2008, *Humor y traducción. Los Simpson cruzan la frontera*, Publicaciones Universitat Jaume I, Castellón.

Mullin, B., 1999, "The Simpsons, American Satire", *The Simpsons Archive*, <<http://www.simpsonsarchive.com/other/papers/bm.paper.html>> (15 January 2016).

Penrod, L. K., 1993, "Translating Hélène Cixous: French Feminisms and Anglo-American Feminist Theory", *Traduction, Terminology, Rédaction*, 62, pp. 32-41.

Pinsky, M. I., 1999, "The Gospel According to Homer", *Orlando Sentinel*, 15 August, <http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/1999-08-15/news/9908130346_1_simpsons-god-and-christianity-evangelical> (15 January 2016).

Pinsky, M. I., 2007, *The Gospel According to 'The Simpsons': Bigger and Possibly Even Better!*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville/London.

Sahih Muslim, 2006, Elmaktab el Islami, Beirut.



Salmon Kovarski, L., 1996, "Problemi di intraducibilità culturale nel film russo-sovietico: l'ambiguità di *Taxi Blues*", in C. Heiss and R. M. Bollettieri Bosinelli (eds), *Traduzione multimediale per il cinema, la televisione e la scena*, CLUEB, Bologna, pp. 251-262.

Seliger, M., 1976, *Ideology and Politics*, George Allen, London.

Shochat, E. and R. Stam, 1985, "The Cinema after Babel: Language, Difference, Power", *Screen*, 26(3-4), pp. 35-58.

Sohn, J., 2000, "Simpson Ethics", *The Simpsons Archive*, <<http://www.simpsonsarchive.com/other/papers/js.paper.html>> (15 Jan 2016).

Whitman-Linsen, C. G., 1992, *Through the Dubbing Glass: The Synchronization of American Motion Pictures into German, French and Spanish*, Peter Lang, New York.

Yunxing, L., 1998, "Cultural Factors in Translation", *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 6(2), pp.175-82.

Zabalbeascoa, P., 1996, "Translating Jokes for Dubbed Television Situation Comedies", *The Translator* 2(2), pp.235-57.

Rashid Yahiaoui is currently an assistant professor at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), Qatar. He has a PhD in Translation Studies from London Metropolitan University, UK, and a Master in Translation and Interpreting from the University of Salford, UK. Prior to joining HBKU, Rashid worked at Yanbu University College, KSA, for eight years where he taught translation and interpreting, EFL and academic writing. He has extensive experience as a professional interpreter, having worked for the Home Office and the National Healthcare Service in the UK for over 10 years. His main research interests are Audiovisual Translation, Dubbing, Cultural Studies, Ideology, Gender Stereotyping in the Arab World, and Interpreting Studies.

ryahiaoui@qf.org.qa