Melville in Motion: Cultural Transformations of *Moby-Dick* in Arabic-Dubbed Cartoons

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Abstract

This paper considers readers' different backgrounds and perspectives due to the fact that interpretations of literary texts are not static but can change over time and across cultures. The study suggests that political symbolism in *Moby-Dick* may be interpreted differently by Arab and Middle Eastern readers compared to Western readers. Hence, the article aims to uncover alternative perspectives that have contributed to painting the unobjective image of America in Arab perceptions. Regarding the methodology, this paper applies Wolfgang Iser's reception theory which gives the reader the full right not only to discover meanings but also to produce them in the text as well. Accordingly, the specificity of the Arab child recipient of an American classic requires a different approach that seeks to uncover the connotations of Melville's *Moby-Dick* that certainly has room in the Arab mentality today because the accessibility of *Moby-Dick* through cartoon adaptations has facilitated its reach to millions of children globally, including those in Arab nations. These adaptations offer Arab audience access to the ethical themes, which are often integrated into televised versions as essential educational content. This paper also explores the television adaptations and cultural localization of *Moby-Dick*`s cartoons by identifying the unique characteristics of Arab culture embedded within dubbed motion pictures because translating Melville's work into Arabic involves subtle cultural adjustments that resonate with the values and sensibilities of Arab and predominantly Muslim societies.

Keywords: American Literature, Fiction, Graphic Novels, Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, Television Adaptation

1. Introduction

Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick or the Whale* (1851) has inspired many reader responses and incited significant scholarly investigation, delving into every minute detail of Melville's *tour de force*. Wai Chee Dimock (2006) has, in recent times, pinpointed that those adaptations of *Moby-Dick* "weave in and out of other geographies, other languages and cultures" (p. 3). Therefore, the transatlantic rendition of Melville's writings is subject to highlighting vast parallels, even combinations, between the American and the target demographic receptions. Therefore, the transatlantic rendition of Melville's writings is subject to highlighting vast parallels, even combinations, between the American and the target demographic receptions. However, it is crucial to understand that the critical interpretations of such comparative re-readings and interpretations in Arabic renditions recognize "no consideration of Muslim readings of the American's fiction" (Abou Adel et al., 2024; Einboden, 2010; Al-Badawi, 2022). In another article, Einboden (2013) also argues that the network of *eastward* translations both epitomizes the problem of transporting US texts into the pantheon of Middle Eastern languages and serves as a significant tool for re-reading US authors themselves. In fact, we think that the lack of convergence between American and Arab media culture and the shifting cultural exploration prompt this rarefied of study to show how oriental contours in Melville's adapted novel map out a rendition *eastward* while employing new havens in the Arab world.

As emphasized by David Dowling, each adaptation of *Moby-Dick* encapsulates Ahab's frustration towards the whale, which often mirrors broader "social and political frustrations" ingrained within the national consciousness (p. 50). In other words, the adaptations handled here will lend themselves to being pedagogically formative elements of Arab nationality. This paper examines pivotal early adaptations of *Moby-Dick* tailored for pedagogic strategies within the Arabic world: The first animated movie appeared in 1973, crafted by Walter J. Hucker and directed by Richard Slapczynski, with a screenplay penned by Alexander Buzo (Melville, Herman, et al., writers); its rendition in 1977 surfaced in Baghdad, translated by Faik Alhakeem (Digital Documentation, 2021); the second adaptation appeared in 2008, titled *'Moby—The Adventures of Young Moby Dick*,' translated by Akif Najeem in Jordan under the auspices of the Good Times Company, authored by Robert Sandler and Mark Shekter, and directed by Laura Shepherd, Garry Blye, and Henry Less in Canada (Melville, Herman, et al., writers).

Through a comparative analysis of these adaptations, we will identify the ways in which layers of meaning extend beyond Melville's novel via a feasible dialogue with contemporary Arab audiences. Eventually, we will introduce Arab critics with a new critical lens that might enrich Melville's reception among scholars.

2. Method

Based on reception theory, this paper offers a unique perspective by emphasizing the variability of meanings in literary texts which evolve with changes in time, place, and reader because, as Al-Awadi (2017) informs us that text is a living entity. This research highlights that the political symbolism in the cartoon adaptation of *Moby-Dick* might appear anew or even strange to Western recipients, but it is unsurprising for "Melville as we know him now—the arch-canonical, endlessly protean author" (Yothers, 2021, p. 1). Yet, it is quite plausible for Arab and Middle Eastern viewers due to their different cultural and experiential backgrounds. This precisely gives this research its uniqueness and importance compared to previous studies. It would be an opportunity to view a different and bold critical perspective that allows Western readers to understand Arabs' possible ways of interpreting foreign works.

This is because the reader is the most important party among the three parties: the author, the text, and the recipient. No text written is worth anything if no one reads it, no matter how great. The author considers the implied reader throughout his writing of the text. Edmund Husserl (2001) expresses this with the concept of intentionality. If we want to know the author's intentionality in the text, it must be read in the light of the era in which it was written. However, this intentionality may differ when read vis-à-vis another era by a different recipient.

However, reception theory believes in the multiplicity of meanings of the text itself, and based on this paper, it is assumed that there are new meanings that *Moby-Dick*`s cartoons acquire in their reception within the Arab region by the targeted children in an era different from the time of its composition, and this is what Gadamer called in his interpretation the historical horizon (Gadamer, 2008; see also Matheson, 2009), and on what Jauss (1982) built his new concept of the horizon of expectation. The changes in the original version are caused by the implied reader, who is different this time in his culture and age group. The aesthetics of reception are manifested in the belief that there are gaps and unspoken things in *subtext* according to Iser (1980). The gaps are like blind spots that are only revealed to the discerning reader who realizes how he can read the text with the professionalism of an expert. At the same time, the literary critic derives pleasure from flying with his imagination to fill those gaps and explore what is unspoken, as reception theory does not believe in the concept of the passive recipient of fixed and final meanings in the text. Rather, it believes in the recipient's effectiveness and ability to produce renewed and important meanings in the text that the writer did not necessarily intend or mean when he produced his literary work. These meanings are precisely what give any text its importance, because they are difficult for the general reader, and are not free and easy to understand.

In this context, the transmission of *Moby-Dick* to a different medium of narrative foregrounds the terms intertextuality and intermediality, both of which could be explained through the synergy of different cultural products and dialogues. The interactions mentioned here do not recognize national borders but rather employ a conjunction of in-between phenomena that make their way through the reproductions of the text.

This point of view, however, does not necessarily take on a dialogue between reproduction and the original material on the same generic quality. Intermediality provides the token for enhancing an in-depth analysis in this regard, for reproduction succumbs to the narratives of differences when the artistic memory comes to the fore. Regarding this aspect of polymorphic diversity of intermediality, Jan Baetens and Domingo Sánchez-Mesa Martínez's words are as follows:

> The intermedial study of literature […] does not only refer to the study of the relationship between the literary text and its "others" (for instance the illustrations that accompany it, to give an elementary example), it also includes the study of the literary as a heterogenous material that conveys a more or less radical "semiotic rupture" within itself (for instance when we interpret aspects of typography, from typeface to page layout and book design, as aspects of the text's visuality—a dimension of literature that has always been at the center of visual and experimental poetry. (2015, p. 294)

This paper intends to see beyond the poetics of the original reception of *Moby-Dick* because the Arabic receptions have proven to be either domesticated or foreignized in their oriental touches. In this statement lies a possible shift in the target lexica and renditions that we might expect from the official speech of the western *Moby-Dick* in a Bakhtinian sense. Such a study could also serve as a catalyst that underpins further scholarly debates on the Arabic consciousness "inside" the language because, as approved by Lawrence Conrad (2004), "modern Arabic is in the position to express the most complex concepts and ideas of other cultures" (p. 179).

3. New and Modern Cultural Political Interpretation of *Moby-Dick*'s Cartoons

Literary works contain symbolic contents, political and social dimensions, and cultural connotations. Accordingly, *Moby-Dick* can be viewed as having symbolic and metaphorical connotations. Marr and Dwivedi point out that from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, Americans exploited the image of Islam, Muslim civilizations, and the Middle East for various domestic and international political, social, and cultural goals (Marr, 2006; Dwivedi, 2023).

Hence, it is worth noting that the cultural and political overtones in *Moby-Dick*'s cartoons affect the image of American society in the consciousness of children in the Arab region. Despite the fact that Moby-Dick is considered the first American work of fiction and represents an important literary source for American popular memory, the captain represents the dictatorial authority that creates justifications for his attacking others out of a desire for blind revenge after he loses his leg when he tries to hunt the white whale, Moby Dick. He has deluded his crew by saying that he is fighting to save humanity from the monster white whale's danger to gain the sailors'

sympathy and support. The appeal finds expression in Vafa's observation (2014) that pronounces Ishmael's status of being the narrator as a conduit of world politics, claiming his authority over the readers' perception of the narrated story-world. At a different but related level, the recourse to historical relevance could be read as Bakhtin's "the present in all its open-endedness" (2009, p. 108).

This mirrors the geopolitical actions of major powers today, which often claim to spread democracy or liberate nations while causing significant material, psychological, and human damage. Such interpretations could distort the values of American society rather than promote a positive image, despite the novel's celebration of American literary creativity.

Such a Modern reading is not new, as Leroux explains the impact of the novel and its relationship with the Middle East and what happened after the terrorist attacks on September 11. Considering *Moby-Dick*'s cartoons, the current Arab mindset can make a connection between the whalers, headed by their captain, invading the sea world and attacking whales, safe in their habitats, in search of the precious oil that represents energy thus allegorizing "the dramatic personae of Melville's work into an ideological representation of America's war with 'terrorism' and fascism by conflating these categories with an ever shifting and all-encompassing East" (Leroux, 2009, p. 425).

Major powers of the modern era invade safe and reassuring countries while they aspire to control their energy resources, especially oil, which has emerged as an alternative to whales' oil, ignoring the material and psychological damage and human lives that are lost by such violations that they commit while they proclaim humanitarian motives behind them, such as their efforts to spread democracy in those developing countries, liberating them, or ridding the world of their danger. Rosenthal (2023) underscores that democracy was a dominant obsession in Melville's writings and Greiman (2023) expresses that democracy is "the perennial theme and the political, aesthetic, and philosophical problem that connects his writing across five decades" (p. 3).

Understanding the historical, political, and social circumstances that coincided with the writing of the novel lead to a deeper understanding of the symbolism of the content, fictional characters, and events in the novel (Spengler, 2021) at a time when freedom of expression was not available, as this novel seems to present an early warning cry provided by Herman Melville. In the middle of the nineteenth century, he calls for following the democratic approach (Morrisey, 2023). Otherwise, their fate is destruction as happened at the end of this novel.

Literature is known for its ability to express political prohibitions without causing harm or danger to the writer. Because the writer uses symbols and employs fictional characters to express his political opinions with greater freedom and creativity. However, by shifting the book from its original language to a host language like Arabic alters *Moby-Dick*'s linguistic framework, thereby transforming the narrative structure and revealing previously concealed elements. When Melville's works are translated into other languages, they are distanced from their domestication inside the US canon, allowing for a fresh examination of their structures and meanings. In other words, when the novel is translated into other languages, such as Arabic, its narrative shifts, bringing hidden aspects to the forefront. This linguistic displacement allows for new interpretations of Melville's work, as it moves beyond its American context and opens up fresh examinations of its structure and meaning.

In Herman Melville's novel, *Moby-Dick*, the narrator Ishmael describes the titular whale as a legendary, enormous creature renowned for its ferocity and its ability to destroy ships. The whale is the embodiment of "all the subtle demonism of life and thought" (Melville, 1967, p. 185). This characterization of *Moby-Dick* has been questioned by scholars such as Dowling (2014), who argues that attributing such brutal characteristics to an otherwise docile marine animal may be influenced by factors such as the popularity of monsters in the film industry and the demand for action films requiring a villain. In stark contrast, the animated adaptation of *Moby-Dick* presents the whale as a benign and peaceful character, with Captain Ahab embodying the role of the villainous aggressor. This significant alteration primarily caters to a younger audience that typically adores animals and prefers to see the whale depicted positively rather than as a monstrous killer. Affirming Oğuzhan Ayrım's statement that likens the whale's albino skin to "a smooth white paper" (2024, p. 132), this change reflects that the shift in focalization about how the whale is taken the orientals to the person in charge of a *pen* or a *script*.

When comparing the original novel with its animated adaptation, notable changes are evident in the portrayal of characters such as Queequeg. In the novel, Queequeg is depicted with "unearthly tattooing" (Melville, 1967, p. 39), a distinctive appearance that is culturally and religiously inappropriate in the Arab region. Consequently, the children's cartoons omit Queequeg's tattoos to prevent children from imitating such features. The animated film deliberately omits any references to the Christian religious elements associated with Ishmael, including but not limited to, the church, mass, sermons, priests, patriarchs, the story of Jonah, the Bible, repentance, forgiveness, and sin. This likely aims to ensure the film's universal appeal by making it as religiously neutral as possible to cater to diverse audiences.

Furthermore, the animated adaptation excludes Queequeg's pagan religion and polytheistic practices, including his worship of a small idol. These practices are portrayed as ancient pagan superstitions that are eradicated in the Arabian Peninsula following Prophet Muhammad's revelation in 610 AD. These behaviors are also undesirable in other major religions, including Christianity and Judaism; thus, avoiding mentioning polytheism, which was prevalent in ancient Arab countries, makes the adaptation more suitable for a broader audience. The animated film also excludes scenes of bullying and racism, such as the abuse Queequeg faced due to his tattoos and skin color. Queequeg is initially perceived as dangerous in the novel, but this perspective shifts after he saves the ship from sinking. With the removal of these scenes from the animated adaptation, the film promotes acceptance of diversity and discourages offensive behavior based on differences in appearance, thought, or religion (Abou Adel, 2023).

4. Arabization of Melville's *Moby-Dick*

Due to the extensive number of studies addressing Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick*, the current research opts not to prolong the comparison between the original novel and its cartoon adaptation. Instead, it focuses on an understudied area: comparing the Arabic and foreign versions of *Moby-Dick`s* cartoons. The primary objective of this research is to explore the changes made in the Arabic version of *Moby-Dick`s* cartoons in light of its foreign counterpart, revealing how cultural and linguistic considerations shape the adaptation process.

One notable change in the Arabic version of the cartoons is the alteration of dialogue to achieve vocal harmony, a feature highly valued in Arabic speech. For instance, in the English version, a mother tells her son, "your father used to say: I am the king of the seas, I defy gravity" (Gatewayuser200 03:11-03:15 Sec), implying his strength and ability to jump high above the sea's surface. In the Arabic version, this line is translated as, "he can defy dangers" (Rare Cartoons 03:03-03:08 Sec) which provides a contextually appropriate meaning. This change reflects the idea that jumping high out of the seawater makes the whale visible and vulnerable to whalers, which is a critical plot point as the mother attempts to protect her son from whalers, ultimately leading to her demise.

The Arabic version also includes nuanced translations due to political and technical considerations. The word "king" is replaced with "master" to avoid political connotations associated with rulers in some Arab countries, thus preventing potential political interpretations that might negatively impact those involved in the film's production. Consequently, the phrase "king of the seas" is rendered as "lord of the seas" in Arabic.

Furthermore, the phrase "defies gravity" is changed to "defies dangers" for artistic purposes, specifically to achieve rhetorical assonance. This linguistic adjustment produces a pleasing sound effect in Arabic, particularly for children, making the dialogue more melodious and akin to poetry. Such phonetic considerations are crucial in Arabic storytelling, enhancing the narrative's appeal and ensuring that the adaptation resonates well with its intended audience:

Ana Malek **Al Behar**, Ana Atahadda **Aljathbya**.

While the sound in Arabic is as follows:

Ana Sayed **Abehar**. Ana Atahadda **Al Akhtar**

This last expression means, "I am the master of the seas; I defy dangers." Both sentences end with the same letters: " أنا سيد **البحار**، أنا أتحدى **الأخطار**."

In another scene, when little Moby Dick challenges an older whale but fails to jump due to the painful memory of his mother being murdered while protecting him, his rival Storm mockingly says, "So much for the prince of the sea" (Gatewayuser200 22:32-22:35 Sec). The Arabic translation changes the word "prince" because of its political connotations, which refer to members of the royal family in countries with monarchical rule. In Arab countries, using the term "prince" for someone not belonging to the ruling family could counterpose the ontological level of individual faith in Islam (Khater et al., 2024), which is "the ability to rationally determine what is in one's best interest and having the motivation to live accordingly" (Fraenkel, 2010, p. 340). This complexity is heightened in a film intended for television, where avoiding political interpretations is crucial to preventing accountability issues for those responsible for the translation. Consequently, the word "prince" is replaced with "Lord's Son of the Seas" (Rare Cartoons 19:43-19:45 Sec) in the Arabic version. This substitution aligns with the film's context, implying a person with significant experience and capability in a specific field.

Additionally, the Arabic dubbing incorporates some Islamic phrases, such as "may Allah have mercy on him" (Rare Cartoons 2:24) to express the deceased, whereas the original uses "rest his soul" (Rare Cartoons 2:24). These changes not only respect cultural sensitivities but also enhance the film's relatability for the Arabic-speaking audience.

Fundamental changes in the Arabic version of *Moby-Dick*'s cartoons are also evident in the inclusion of songs, which are not present in the original novel. These songs, sung by little Moby-Dick, are examined in both the Arabic and English versions to analyze their technical and content aspects. By comparing these musical elements, we could understand how the adaptation tailors the story to suit the tastes and cultural norms of its audience while maintaining the essence of the original narrative:

By myself, just me in the deep blue sea on my own now Far from home myself By myself, there is no one to call me names By myself, I can play all my games on my own now Far from home myself By myself, I can take any test and pretend that I am the winner By myself, I can eat when I want not to be home by dinner By myself, I can be a parade and play follow the leader By myself, I am the master of my face By myself, I can stay up very late On my own now, far from home myself On my own now so alone myself (Gatewayuser200 32:00-33:58)	أعيش لوحدي، ولا من أحد يمكنه أن يسخر بي أعيش لوحدي، وحيدا وكل البحر الأزرق لي تراني لوحدي بعزمي وجدي أعيش لوحدي، لا من أحد يعرف اسمي لأني لوحدي لأني وحيد ورأيي سديد أعيش لوحدي، تراني لوحدي بعزمي وجدي أعيش لوحدي ما دمت وحيد، فإني أصر بكل سباق أنا المنتصر لأني لوحدي وكلي صفاء أغوص بأكلي وأنى أشاء لأني لوحدي، أكون الكثير فتارة جندي، وأخرى أمير لأني لوحدي، لأني لوحدي، فإني أسود وحظي بيدي؛ لأني وحيد (Rare Cartoons 30:43-32:35)

The tone of the voice in the Arabic song is sad expressing loneliness and separation from others, and the accompanying music is not cheerful, featuring a slow, subdued tempo. In contrast, the rhythm of the music in the English version is higher, a little faster, and more enthusiastic, especially in the second half of the song, despite both versions following the same basic rhythm. While translation plays a significant role in *Moby-Dick*'s cartoons, Arabization is particularly prominent in the songs. Translation tends to be more faithful to the original text, preserving events, names, ideas, and meanings. Meanwhile, Arabization allows for some deviations from the original text to ensure compatibility with the new environment "not only as a national pride, but also for teaching, educational, academic, socio-political, socio-religious and socio-cultural reasons" (Ghazala, 2013, p. 25).

In terms of content, the Arabic version of the cartoons eliminates certain phrases, such as "I can play all my games on my own now far from home myself," as this could encourage children to embrace the idea of separation from society and not sharing their toys with others. This contradicts educational principles that promote altruism and social interaction to enhance a child's social skills and psychological health. The phrase "far from home myself" is also removed from the Arabized song, whereas it is repeated three times in the English version. In Arab societies, the family unit is paramount, and it is strictly unacceptable for children to think about living away from their family, even after reaching puberty, getting married, or having children. The spread of Islam in its early stages can be attributed to its adoption by nomadic tribes influenced by a consciousness of Darwinian survival of the fittest. Therefore, the notion of an extended family has been etched in collective memory since then, so much so that it is now the "basic unit" of society (Patai, 1952, p. 9). Another deletion is the phrase "By myself, I can stay up very late," a sentiment loved by children but considered unhealthy as it conflicts with the necessity of sleeping early and waking up early for their physical and psychological well-being.

Technically, comparing the four songs reveals that Ahab's song mostly follows "Bahr Al-Mutadarik," adhering to a system of alternating vowel and consonant sounds (فَعْلُنْ فَعْلُنْ فَعْلُنْ فَعْلُنْ) or three vowels followed by one consonant. This meter is musically simple and appeals to children, despite the epic nature of the poem's subject matter. This requires significant manipulation of meanings and words to fit the Arabic poetic meter appropriately.

The meter system contrasts with the use of verse libre in the lyric poem for little Moby Dick. The choice of poetic form for each character was successful in terms of both form and content. Captain Ahab's poem, which discusses his war against the whale, is well-suited to vertical poetry due to the specific word choices required by meter, rhythm, and poetic prosody. On the other hand, verse libre for Moby Dick fits the character of the young whale, as it is free from meter, rhyme, and the two-party system. This allows the speaker a greater flexibility in choosing easy, simple words, which is appropriate for the age of the Moby Dick whale, making it convincing to the listener.

Here is the Arabic song translated into English for literary analysis:

Now listen to me now Listen to me honestly \ And to understand my voice and my warning \ The warning stirs the conscience \ And remember that I warned you \ of a hard-toothed beast \ A huge whale named Moby \ Its jaw with strong teeth \ It preys on the world It has red eyes, and a flash \ like the sun that radiates from it \ His name is horrible Moby Dick, men beware \ O Moby, my spears will show you \ that I will not flee from hunting you \ And the sea'sroar will make you cry with tears \ but with inexhaustible blood \ Oh white whale objecting nightmare of evil intent \ And beware of the inhabitants of the earth \ as the whale is the enemy of humanity \ O Moby, my spears will show you \ that I will not flee from hunting you \ And the sea'sroar will make you cry with tears \ but with inexhaustible blood \ O Moby, you will strike my spears will get you \ O Moby, you from my spears. (Rare Cartoons 13:29-14:47)

The song is according of the classical style of the Arabic poetry:

فلتسمعني الآن الآنـــا فلتسمعني بكل أمانـــــة

ولتفهم صوتي وندائي فالصوت يثير الوجدانا

ولتذكر أني حذرتك من وحش قاسي الأسنانا

حوت ضخم اسمه موبي والفــك قـــوي الأسنانـــا

يفترس الدنيا بما فيها وعيون حمر وورميض كالشمس تشع بما فيها

اسمه موبي ديك المرعب، فاحذروه يا رجال

يا موبي رماحي ستريك أني من صيدك لن أهرب

والبحـر هديرُه سيبكيك دمعًا بـل دمًّا لا ينضـب

يا حوتًا أبيضَ معترضًا كـابـوسًا شـريـر النية

والحذر لسكان الأرض فالحـوت عـدوُّ البشرية

يا موبي رماحي ستريك أني من صيدك لن أهرب

والبحـر هديرُه سيبكيك دمعًا بـل دمًّا لا ينضـب

يا موبي ستريك رماحي يا موبي ويلك من رماحي

(Rare Cartoons 13:29-14:47)

The same song in English is as follows:

Now listen up and listen well \ for here's a warning I need tell \ about a monster of the sea \ who goes the name \ of Moby… \ He's as large as a sailing ship \ a hundred feet from tip to tip \ His jaws can swallow twenty ton \ And his eyes are red like the fiery sun \ He's the terror of the deep \ Who stalks you even when you sleep \ Moby Dick oh Moby Dick \ I'm gonna get you and gonna be quick \ Ah there's lightning bolt \ There's an icy stair get your heart to drool \ He is seven stories high on street \ From his boat can reach the sky \ He's every where's worst nightmare \ It's argument you better beware \ Moby Dick oh Moby Dick \ I'm gonna get you and it's gonna be quick \ I'm gonna get you and it's gonna be quick. (Gatewayuser200 14:02-15:25)

There is an aesthetic use of the verb "listen" at the beginning of the first two halves of Captain Ihab's poem due to the phonetic compatibility in the Arabic language between most of the letters of the Arabic verb (فلتسمعني = Faltasmaoni), as it includes all the letters of the narrator's name (إسماعيل = Ismael). On the other hand, the first song performed by Captain Ahab in the classic Arabic poetry style is characterized by its strict rhyme scheme, following a structure of two parts in every line. This choice by the translator serves two main purposes. First, it aligns with the song's theme of enthusiasm and fighting, reflecting Captain Ahab's leadership-like character. Second, in Arabic literature, rhythmic poetry is meticulously measured by buḥūr, where each buḥūr has a specific rhythm defined by "taf'īlah," necessitating a precise number of taf'ilas in every verse (bayt) of the poem. Thereby, every bayt in a rhymed poem must end with the same rhyme (qāfiyah) throughout the entire piece (Bakkar, 1982, p. 32). This adherence to structure is evident in the dubbed song, which consistently ends lines with rhyming words such as الأسنانا الوجدانا، أمانة، followed by ينضب أهرب، and البشرية النية،.

In contrast, the Arabizations in the songs also focus on the artistic structure and content. When the young whale, Moby Dick, sings the second poem, it follows a modern poetry style that disregards end rhymes, allowing for more expressive flexibility. The vocabulary is simpler, and the ideas reflect a child's perspective, encompassing themes of fear, bullying, shyness, and a preference for solitude. Modern Arabic poetry, as seen here, is less constrained by formal rules compared to classical poetry.

The film presents *Moby-Dick* from two contrasting perspectives. Captain Ahab imagines him as a menacing creature akin to a monster in the first song. In contrast, the second song depicts Moby Dick as a peaceful and innocent creature who prefers solitude to avoid the evils and bullying of others who reject him. This dichotomy reflects the childish desires of Moby Dick, such as not sharing toys, staying up late, and eating away from home.

The cartoon adaptation of *Moby-Dick* adheres to reception theory, prioritizing the audience's preferences over strict fidelity to the original text or author's intentions. This approach allows for modifications that cater to the recipient's needs and preferences, thereby ensuring the adaptation's relevance and appeal. *The Adventures of Young Moby Dick* employs a comic style, anthropomorphizing sea creatures into human-like characters, which resonates with "the input children receive in their learning attitudes towards living creatures" (Reider, 2024, p. 1). Hence, Moby Dick is portrayed as a child with a loving family, contrasting sharply with Captain Ahab's portrayal of him as a malevolent force, a stark departure from Melville's depiction of him as a monstrous entity.

Cartoon adaptations also make use of sound animations, which "enhance engagement and convey moral lessons effectively to children" (Lothe, 2000, p. 153) with bright music and a reassuring female narrator's voice. Reflecting Baidya's modern theory of color preferences that stresses learning through visual and aural cues, these adaptations include additional moral values and educational components into their stories (2020, p. 2). Young viewers also find great attraction in the utilization of vivid colors and energetic character movements. Visual and aural approaches taken together help to create more immersive and unforgettable moral storytelling.

Furthermore, the Arabic adaptation of *Moby-Dick*'s narrative incorporates elements resonant with Arabic culture. For instance, dreams are depicted as an interpretation of future events, drawing on Arab traditions where symbolism in dreams holds significance: "Even the beginning of the Quranic revelation is related as coming to the Prophet in the form of dreams, so that dreaming lies at the very foundations of Islam" (Sirriyeh, 2011, p. 215). This cultural adaptation extends to character interpretations as well. While Melville presents Fedallah as a mysterious figure, the Arabic translation by Ihsan Abbas interprets Fedallah as a Muslim character, claiming that Fedallah has been inspired by *One Thousand and One Nights.*

This paper places a significant emphasis on the nuanced changes made in the Arabic translation of *Moby-Dick*'s cartoons. These subtle alterations highlight fundamental differences between Arabic and Western cultures, underscoring the translator's dual role in understanding both languages and the respective cultural contexts. While translating text into Arabic, the translator carefully considers its suitability for the Arab environment across various dimensions. This includes evaluating how the work will be received in Arab countries, particularly by its intended audience i.e. children, and also ensuring that parents will approve the content's educational value for their children. In Ayrım's terms (2024, p. 134), the hand holding the pen must navigate the stringent requirements of television censorship in Arab countries. Ensuring the cartoon aligns with Arab religious, educational, and cultural values is of paramount importance in avoiding potential bans or controversies. It is equally important to avoid any political undertones that could be misinterpreted or deemed sensitive in the Arab context. Thus, while maintaining fidelity to the original text, the Arabic translation of *Moby-Dick*'s cartoons undergoes meticulous adjustments to resonate authentically with Arab audiences. These adaptations reflect linguistic considerations and cultural sensitivities, ensuring the cartoon's acceptance and relevance within the Arab cultural sphere.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The generation of Arab children who encountered *Moby-Dick*`s cartoons in the 1970s is now in their fifties. Scenes from these cartoons have left an indelible mark on their memories and subconscious, allowing them to recall symbolic elements and interpret them politically, especially in the light of the historical events and political developments in Arab countries. These adaptations of *Moby-Dick* might

unintentionally reinforce negative perceptions of dominant powers imposing themselves strongly rather than promoting positive messages. Ideally, such adaptations should foster tolerance and reduce hate speech rather than perpetuate negative stereotypes.

The classic work *Moby-Dick* has acquired new meanings through its adaptation for Arab children. This transformation results from various agents involved in the process, starting with the scriptwriter who has the freedom to edit and adapt the original text according to their understanding and the needs of the target audience—children in this case. The scriptwriter also considers the objectives they wish to achieve through the visual and audio reception of the novel. Consequently, the original text undergoes minor or major changes, with added educational values among the most significant modifications in the case of cartoons.

The animated *Moby-Dick* embraces diversity and pluralism, advocating for the acceptance of others. Portraying such racial abuse to children could encourage them to imitate these behaviors. One example of racism in the original novel is the prohibition of people of color from sitting in white people's places after they had finished eating on land, a rule that was positively subverted on the ship. The animation stresses the need for inclusiveness and tolerance by eliminating these components, therefore encouraging a feeling of equality and respect among youngsters. These adaptations not only update the story but also help it to match social values. The animation guarantees that young viewers receive good and constructive lessons about diversity by turning the attention to cooperation and mutual respect among the characters.

Hence, the animated adaptation of *Moby-Dick* makes significant changes to characters and themes to cater to a young audience, reflects evolving societal values, and ensures cultural and religious appropriateness. By altering the portrayals of Moby Dick and Captain Ahab, removing religious references, and excluding scenes of racism and bullying, the adaptation seeks to create a more inclusive and positive viewing experience for children, promoting values of compassion, acceptance, and equality. These changes not only make the story more accessible and enjoyable for children but also align with modern values of diversity and respect for different cultures and beliefs.

Additionally, the Arabic translator employed Arabization in songs in two distinct ways: adhering to classical Arabic poetic structures and altering meanings and ideas that contradict Arab cultural values, such as little Moby Dick's desire to live in isolation from other marine animals. This adaptation ensures that the story fits the collectivist character of Arab society, which stresses social peace and harmony. The translation makes the story more relevant and culturally appropriate for Arab viewers by changing the songs to support ideas of cooperation and belonging.

This paper recommends further future research that enhances understanding of the translation effects and cultural adaptation of world literary works and emphasizes the importance of considering local cultural values to ensure that literary messages are appropriately and effectively delivered. Future research should deepen the discussion on reception theory, especially that which addresses how translated literary works are received by audiences that are culturally different from the original culture of the works.

It is recommended that dubbed versions include positive educational values, such as tolerance and acceptance of others, to provide content that promotes appropriate human and educational values for children.

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Authors' contributions

Dr. MAA was responsible for the research design, data collection, discussion, manuscript writing, and served as the corresponding author. OA, Dr. MIA, Dr. MA, and Dr. MA contributed by providing essential discussion points and co-authoring the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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