

Socio-Political Constraints on Translating Verbal and Non-Verbal Texts

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ABSTRACT

*This paper relates to different kinds of political or social problems in translation through examining the content of Asher Susser's political book, *On Both Banks of the Jordan: A Political Biography of Wasfi Al-Tall*. It was translated into Arabic by Jawdat Al-Sa'd: *Al-Khat Al-Akhdar bain Al-Urdun wa Falasteen: Serat Wasfi Al-Tall Asiyasiyyah*. The paper restricts itself to Susser's book for two reasons. Firstly, the book embodies translations into Arabic, thus allowing us an opportunity to consider translations in a bi-directional manner. Secondly, this work illustrates the influence of politics and social norms on translation. In order to illustrate the discrepancies between the (ST) and the (TT) in terms of the socio-political, eleven examples were examined and analysed by three professors of translation, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. The paper benefits from interviews with politicians, military officers, and researchers.*

Key words: socio-political constraints, translation, norms, power, Wasfi

1. Introduction

The topic of translation and conflict is particularly timely in the current political climate in the Middle East. Asher Susser's book, *On Both Banks of the Jordan: A Political Biography of Wasfi Al-Tall* – will be referred to as the source text (ST), is a political biography of the Jordanian politician Wasfi al-Tall. The book was originally written in Hebrew (two editions: 1986 & 1983). Then, it was written in English (1994). The ST is an example of a political text about a statesman who played a decisive role in the political life of modern Jordan, and to a great extent the Middle East, during the late 1950s until his assassination on 28 November 1971. Some of the political decisions that Wasfi Al-Tall took were, and still are, the source of great controversy, particularly the eviction of the Palestinian Organisations from Jordan in 1971. As a result, the written sources about Al-Tall's political life are likely to involve the interplay between politics, power and taboos of Jordanian society. This means that some of the content of (ST) is deemed to be untranslatable because, in the first place, it is not mentioned in the Jordanian political framework. A number of researchers and politicians are likely to consider it a threat to the fabric of Jordanian society where the Palestinians, as the London-based Oxford Business Group (April 2007) stated, "at least two thirds of Jordan's population were of Palestinian origin". It also provoked the feelings of the public in Jordan for a number of reasons. Firstly, the (ST) is written by a writer who is considered to be not only an outsider (a foreigner) but also by an Israeli in particular. Secondly, the writer unveiled some important information that is considered – by the Jordanian Department of Press and Publication (DPP), and a number of politicians – debatable, sensitive and intended to be strictly limited. Thirdly, Wasfi Al-Tall himself is considered to be one of the most controversial politicians in the history of Jordan. Whenever his name is mentioned among Jordanians, feelings are always deep, and opinions strongly held. The book was translated by Jawdat Al-Sa'd: *Al-Khat Al-Akhdar bain Al-Urdun wa Falasteen: Serat Wasfi Al-Tall Asiyasiyyah* – will be referred to as the target text (TT).

1.1. Significance of the Study

The Palestinian-Jordanian situation has been a complicating factor in the Jordanian political process since ever Jordan was established in 1921. Over the years, the Palestinian equation became further complicated as external pressures were brought to bear on Jordan. The development of the Palestinian issue has portended uncertain implications for Jordan's domestic politics and its relationship with the West Bank of The River Jordan. It is time to read the script of the changes that are currently taken place in the Middle East. The understanding of the huge political changes that are gaining ground every day in the region is in the details. Basically, these details inform dominance of the discourse and language through the use of tools of language used by politicians and linguists alike whenever the Palestinian-Jordanian relationship comes to the socio-political arena. The situation becomes even more complicated when the discourse and language are to be translated. Many factors come into play. The

translator has to be more aware, not only of his/her choice of words but also of the connotations of these words because of the ideologically and politically sensitive discourse used in the Susser's book. Or s/he may offend one or the other party, which is the last thing anyone needs to do in this time of history.

1.2. Methodology of the study

The 207-page English book (differs from the Hebrew in, to use the author's words, "in two main respects. The first chapter, 'the Early Years' has been partly rewritten ... [and the author has] also written a new concluding chapter on the Jordanian political elite which did not appear on the Hebrew book" (Susser 1994: x). Therefore, I will not consider any examples from the first and the concluding chapters because, obviously, the translation (TT) will not have these two chapters. Apart from these two additions to the Hebrew version of the book, Susser's Hebrew and English versions seemed to be essentially the same book. The accuracy of the Hebrew/Arabic/English translations of the book was checked thoroughly by an MA holder of Hebrew (a full time lecturer at Yarmouk University, Jordan) and by two Arab-Israeli citizen students at Jordan University of Science and Technology, Jordan. Although (TT) is available in the Arabic market (Jordan), the availability of (ST) to the public is strictly limited. The ST was not available in 35 bookstores (chosen randomly) in Amman, the capital city, in Irbid, the second biggest city in Jordan, and Al-Sa'd residence place, and in Zarqa (Jordan's industrial city, northeast of Amman and it has, as it is stated by UNRWA, the oldest Palestine refugee camp in Jordan).

The study of the ST and TT provided 20 examples that display the discrepancies between the two books. These examples were given to three professors of translation, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. These 20 examples were then reduced to eleven that, from the three professors' view, illustrate better the purpose of the paper. The research would have benefited from the translator's, opinions and answers for the discussion, and the readings made by the researcher, had he been available on these issues. But, unfortunately, this research was conducted (in 2012) seven years after the death of Al-Sa'd (in 2005). His personal archive, friends and his work colleagues had helped in shedding some light on the choices he made. Therefore, the readings made by the researcher are driven from information gathered resources available.

1.3. The author and the translator

The author of the *On Both Banks of the Jordan: A Political Biography of Wasfi Al-Tall*, Asher Susser, is Tel Aviv University's Faculty of Humanities Outstanding Lecturer (2006). He earned his PhD in Modern Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University. He was the Director of the Center from 1989 to 1995 and again from 2001 to 2007 and has taught for over twenty-five years in the University's Department of Middle Eastern History. Susser's research and teaching has focused on Modern Middle Eastern History, Religion and State in the Middle East and Arab-Israeli issues, with special reference to Jordan and the Palestinians.

The reference to the issue of Jordan and Palestinians is what links Susser to the translator Jawdat Al-Sa'd who was in 1941 was born in Tiberias, received a Bachelor of Arts from the Department of philosophical and social studies at the University of Damascus in 1965, lived in Jordan for most of his life and died in Damascus in 2005. He is well-known Hebrew Arabic translator. He worked in the field of teaching in Saudi Arabia and in the Iraqi press. He had also served as a director of Al-Jahez publication House and director of the editorial (Arrow) issued to observe economy in Israel. Al-Sa'd is a member of the Jordanian Writers Association and a member of the Arab Writers Union. He published more than eight books on the Israeli history, politics, literature, character, and the Zionist movement. Al-Sa'd is a Ba'thist (the Iraqi Ba'th Wing in opposition to the Syrian Ba'th Wing)

2. The socio-political context of the study:

2.1. Wasfi and Jordan in the Heat of Political Hurly-Burly

The clash between Wasfi Government and the Palestinians during three terms from the early 1960s to the early 1970s has a long history behind it. The discussion of this long history involves all the values, traditions, habits, morals, laws, and taboos of the Jordanian/Arab society. In view of the multifaceted relationship between Jordanians and Palestinians in Jordanian society, Al-Tall was for the East Bankers the statesman who would keep Jordan's territorial integrity. From this patriotic perspective (for the East Bankers) comes the reason for them calling him Wasfi, instead of referring to him as Wasfi Al-Tall or the prime minister as a premier is usually referred to in Jordan; Therefore, in this paper, Al-Tall will be referred to as Wasfi hereafter.

The Palestinian issue remained pivotal in the Jordanian political arena. During his many times in office as a premier (in 1962, 1965 and 1970), Wasfi's confrontation with the Palestinian organisations for the political

control of the country was inevitable. Between 1967 and 1971, the struggle between the Jordanian government and the Palestinian organisations was looming. The establishment of a number of Palestinian organisations that adhered to the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) idea of struggle and the unrestricted Guerrilla Fighters (feda'yeen hereafter) operations seemed to add more fuel to the fire. There were seven Palestinian organisations; the most important ones were: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). The PLO was the main organisation led by El-Shuqairi and later by Yasser Arafat. In the light of the growing hostility between both sides the likelihood of the clash became greater.

2.2. The Assassination: The End of the Jordanian Political Elite

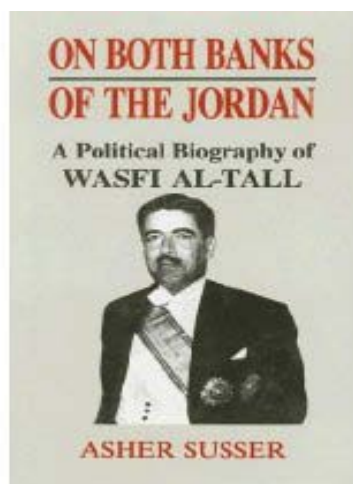
In 1970, King Hussein of Jordan appointed Wasfi to head his new government and to be the minister of Defence. Wasfi's main tasks were to restore confidence between the Jordanian authorities and the Palestinian resistance movement, cooperate with the Arab states, strengthen national unity, pay special attention to the armed forces, and strike with an iron fist all persons spreading destructive rumours.² things did not work out with the Palestinian organizations; the clash with them was a matter of time.. During 1970 and 1971, the Palestinian organisations were evicted from Jordan. The government mission was nearly accomplished.

In November 1973, while attending the conference of Arab Defence Council, Wasfi was assassinated in Cairo by members of the Black September organisation. "Four gunmen lay in wait for Wasfi at the entrance of the Sheraton Hotel... and shot him at close range as he was about to enter" (Susser 1994: 168). The assassination was said to be vengeance for the death of Palestinians killed in the clashes of 1970. Four of the assassins were captured and tried in Cairo. However, the trial was changed into "a platform for a barrage of anti- Jordanian propaganda" (ibid.). The four assassins were released in the end of the trial.

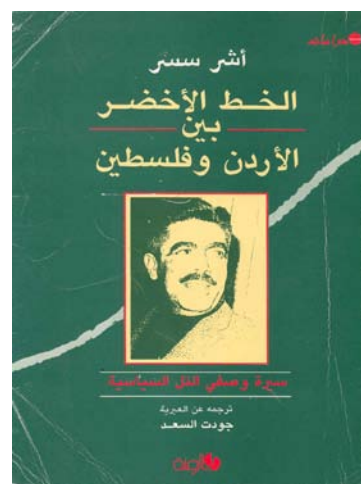
3. Translation Examples of Discrepancies between ST and TT

3.1. Discrepancies in translation related to non-verbal data:

The dissimilarity between the ST and TT are very clear from the first glance at the covers of both of them (Fig.1 & 2 below). The cover is very simple. It comes with a silver background. The title of the book appears in the top of the cover page in red and black. The first part of the book is in red separated by a line that might be symbol of The River Jordan in a two bank image. Underneath comes Wasfi's photograph in a very formal dress: a black jacket, white shirt and the Legion of Honour. Under the photograph comes the author's name in red.



(Fig. 1): ST cover page



(Fig. 2): TT cover page

The cover design of the TT is different. It comes with a green soft cover; the first part of the title of the book, *al-Khat al-Akhdar bain al-Urdun wa Falasteen* (The Green Line between Jordan and Palestine), is written in yellow under the original author's name on the top of the page: *Al-Khat Al-Akhdar bain Al-Urdun wa Falasteen*. Under the title comes a photograph of Wasfi. Under Wasfi's photograph comes the second part of the title, *Serat Wasfi*

al-Tall Asiyasiyyah (Wasfi al-Tall's Political Biography), in red: *Serat Wasfi al-Tall Asiyasiyyah*, which is meant to give the report the implication of sensitivity and seriousness of the topic of the book, and could be a reference to blood. It is also meant to give the book an official appearance. Strangely enough, it is written in smaller font size compared to the rest of the title although it is the main issue of the book. The bigger font size is used for what the translator added to the title, i.e., the managed translation in yellow. The name of the publishing house is written in red: Azminah. This, I think, could be for decoration purposes only. In the middle of the book, a silver line is drawn; it runs from the right edge of the book, under Wasfi's photograph, to the left. Under the silver line comes the name of the translator and then the publishing house.

Obviously, the cover design of the Arabic translations shows more deviation from the formal designs expected for formal documents despite the fact that the Arabic translation was meant to be an official document. The publisher/translator of the TT is daring and more intimate in his choice of Arabic vocabulary in the title and in choosing a photograph to be placed on the covering page. Firstly, the translator added the sentence *Al-Khat Al-Akhdar bain Al-Urdun wa Falasteen* (The Green Line between Jordan and Palestine). The whole sentence is not part of the ST title. The translator chose the word green probably because of its positive connotations in an attempt to tune down or avoid the sensitivity of the topic itself. Or it could be emblematic for the River Jordan which is the reason for fertility in a country where water is in short supply. The design of the covering page could be looked at as a symbol for the map of Jordan and Palestine where the River Jordan divides the two banks.

Secondly, the publishers opted for a photograph of Wasfi. His photograph is placed on the page in a way that joins the two banks. The picture chosen for Wasfi illustrates him in a very simple civilian uniform with a high neck jersey and a jacket. The look in his eyes gives the impression that he was looking into the future like dreamers usually do. Wasfi's photograph is a complete contradiction of his image in the media. Wasfi has been on the receiving end of accusations by the Palestinian and Egyptian media in particular of disloyalty and treason against Arab nationalism. He has been depicted by his *enemies* and *critics*, especially by many Palestinians, as a hardliner, a tough and malicious Jordanian statesman. As stated in his two books, however, he was a loyal leader of his country and the Palestinian cause. His two books, *Falastin: dawr al-'Agl wa al-Kholoq fi Ma'rakat al-Tahrir*: (فلسطين: دور العقل والخلق في معركة التحرير) and *Kitabat fi al-Qadiyya al-'Arabiyya*: (كتابات في القضية العربية) illustrate his belief in the liberation of and his love for Palestine.

3.2. Discrepancies in translation related to verbal data:

The ST includes terms, sentences and phrases that are socially and politically, deemed unacceptable and taboo in Jordanian society.³ The problematic areas in the ST fall in three categories. Firstly, the idea of translating a book written by an Israeli is likely to be taboo for the majority of Jordanians. Secondly, the content of the book itself is a taboo area. In other words, a book about Wasfi is likely to start discussion of the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship. Consequently, the discussion of the banned topic of the deadly clashes of 1970s between both parties deemed unmentionable, becomes inevitable. It also involves discussion of Wasfi's relations with King Hussein. Thirdly, some of the events in Wasfi's life may lead to references to his personal life, wife and family, which is deemed offensive and improper in a society which has been called conservative and clannish. These problematic areas bring to mind the role of translation in the times of conflict and the positioning of translators in war times. They lead to the assumption, as most of the examples will illustrate, that "translation and interpreting are part of the institution of war and hence play a major role in the management of conflict...Translation and interpreting participate in shaping the way in which conflict unfolds in a number of ways" (Baker 2006: 1-2).

Furthermore, the three problematic areas shed light on Robinson's (1996) concept of "Translation and the Other-as-culture" (the Mystery and Reason), and Diaz-Diocaretz's (1985) notion of the *translator-function* "the 'self' or 'persona' who translates appropriately, correctly, acceptably...emotional and intellectual motives...intentions, but....designed, constructed and maintained in order to control readers' approach to the TT" (cited in Robinson 1996: 30).

The first problematic area is translating a book written by an Israeli. Although Jordan has signed a peace agreement in 1994 with Israel, the majority of Jordanians still consider Israel an enemy state mainly because it did not end its occupation of Palestine. To these people, the peace agreement was signed for political reasons; thus, it is the governments' not the peoples' peace.⁴ This view is supported by extensive evidence. Firstly, the huge number of anti-peace articles written by leading politicians and columnists in the Jordanian newspapers.⁵ Secondly, the people's enduring wrath towards what they consider a brutal Israeli reaction to the on-going Palestinian resistance – that takes the form of Intifada (uprising). Thirdly, the belief, from the majority's

perspective, that the Israelis were/are not willing to put into practice the peace agreements with the Arabs. The Israelis and all that Israel might produce are unlikely to be welcome in Jordan.⁶ The normalisation with the Israelis that the government expected did not happen. Therefore, translating a book produced by what the majority of the Jordanian society still considers an *enemy state* might not be a very good first choice for any translator. However, unless the translator was asked to translate for a specific purpose – i.e., for political reasons, for the National Library, for institutions specialising in Hebrew studies or for research – translator(s) would think twice before translating such a dubious choice.

The second problematic area is the content of the book. The discussion of the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship involves socio-political sensitive issues. The bold type and the underlining in the ST and the TT examples are the researcher's and used for illustration.

1. On page (6), ST:

Changes in government in response to such criticism [public scrutiny for the cabinet's policy which is in fact laid down by the King] serve as a mechanism designed to protect the King.

This sentence was not translated into Arabic. In English it has one clear meaning: The government is formed to implement the king's policy and once this policy becomes unpopular, the government works as a shock absorber and/or is sacrificed. The sentence touches upon a very sensitive issue, severe criticising of the king, which is by law not allowed and it a violation of the politically and socially norms in Jordan. The king is vested with authority over the branches of power in the country, that is, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The abovementioned sentence contradicts the laws of the press and publication in Jordan.⁷ Article (40) *prohibited* any publication of *news that touched on the monarch or the Royal Family*. It also contradicts the Jordanian Constitution which states clearly that the king has the right to appoint the prime minster (Article 35).

2. On page (8), ST:

*The PLO purported to provide a political framework potentially appealing to the majority of the population in a manner liable **to threaten the very existence of the Jordanian state** far more directly and more seriously than any of the banned parties had done.*

This sentence is translated on (P.15), TT as

إن إنشاء منظمة التحرير الفلسطينية طرح إمكانية منح الفلسطينيين الذين يعيشون في المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية إطاراً جديداً للتنظيم السياسي ، فكان بمثابة تحدٍّ للحكومة شبيه بتحدي الأحزاب **لله في الخمسينات** بل هو أشدَّ خطورة .

Al-Said's translation is not faithful to the ST text. He, intentionally or unintentionally, left out the important message of the text. The phrase in bold type, **to threaten the very existence of the Jordanian state**, is an accusation against the PLO which is formed, as the sentence says, to be a substitute of the Jordanian regime and "appealing to the majority of the population". Al-Sa'd added words that are not in the ST such as, **تحدٍّ للحكومة** (a challenge to the government) and **في الخمسينات** (in the fifties). The word **تحدٍّ للحكومة** (a challenge to the government) is chosen to replace the ST word *Jordan*. The translator's word choice: a challenge to the government instead of: "*threatening the very existence of Jordan*" is far less influential on the readers of the ST. The translator seemed to neutralize the sentence when he should not have. He reduced the meaning of the ST from a threat to the existence of the country to a mere challenge to the government. The difference between the two meanings is huge. The first means war whereas the later means a political rift. In this case, the translator altered the ST message and the readers ended up having a different meaning to that intended by the ST author.

The translator used the pronoun له (underlined in the ST) to refer to government, feminine, where he should have used لها. Could it be that Al-Sa'd had in mind the word that appears in the ST: *Jordan*, masculine – the pronoun must be له. Furthermore the translator added the words: **في الخمسينات** (in the fifties) which is not found in the ST. In brief, the translation was not loyal to the text due to additions, omissions and permutations. This is termed as managing the situation which was – in addition to the term Monitoring – introduced by Beaugrande and Dressler (1981). The two terms (managing and monitoring) were widely adopted and developed by Beaugrande (1984) Shunnaq (1986, 1992 and 1994), Farghal (1993), Hatim and Masson (1990). The basic thesis of the terms managing is "*if the translator intervenes in the message of the source language text, he will be managing, whereas if he renders it neutrally, he will be monitoring*" (Shunnaq 1992: 36).

3. On page (9), ST:

*The first to achieve real fame, or rather in this case **notoriety**, was Wasfi al-Tall's **cousin** Abdullah al-Tall*

The words *notoriety* and *cousin* (underlined and bold typed above), page 15 in the TT, are not translated. The TT is translated as:

"ومن أشهر الشخصيات البارزة: عبدالله التل الذي"

The word *notoriety* is not translated accurately; the translator opted for the word: البارزة (famous, dominant) to translate *notoriety*. The word *Notoriety* in Arabic has bad connotations if used in political contexts. It means: a person of bad reputation and disrepute (سوء الشهرة ورداءة السمعة). On social grounds, the expression is a taboo in (clannish) Jordanian society because it offends one of the largest families in the north: Al-Tall family. If the translator were to render the word denotatively (of bad reputation & disrepute: سوء الشهرة ورداءة السمعة), his words would sound aggressive and socially unacceptable. The translator did not translate the word *cousin* as well. It is either because the relationship between Wasfi and Abdullah al-Tall is very well known to the Jordanian readers, so translating it would be redundant. Or, as Gera! Saleh (the former Director of the Directorate of the Moral Guidance, Jordan Armed Forces), explained in the interview, it could be that Al-Sa'd did not want to associate Wasfi, the hero, the legend, and the Jordanian premier for three times, with Abdullah al-Tall the one who "was sentenced to death in absentia for his part in the assassination of King Abdullah [I] in 1951" (Susser 1994: 9). Therefore, the translator opted for leaving out the word *cousin*.

4. On page (17), ST:

Safwat, himself had a realistic appraisal of the military potential of the Jews in Palestine.

The sentence above was not translated into Arabic. From a military point of view, as General Saleh states, "It is not acceptable, especially in war times, to render such sentences because it affects negatively the morale of the soldiers". Al-Kilani (the former Director-General of the DPP: Jordanian Department of Press and Publications) supported Saleh's point of view. He added, "even if the translator decided to translate the sentence, it will not appear in the TT. We [the DPP] will censor it".

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5. On page (17), ST:

*None of the Arab armies, **with exception of the Jordan Arab legion** made any significant preparation for the war.*

The bold type part of the text above is not translated. It is hardly understood why an Arab/Jordanian translator would opt not to translate a sentence that praises the Jordanian Army (The Arab Legion). It was the only army that *made any significant preparation* in the war, a proof that comes from an Israeli – *the enemy*. It is politically, psychological and historically important to state these facts to the readers, especially when the role of Jordanian Army in the Arab-Israeli wars was under endless scrutiny by the media in the Arab world (General Saleh). However, one might think that the translator did not want to offend the other Arab countries that had armies without *any significant preparation for the war*. The translator was, most likely for commercial reasons, probably thinking of the market to sell his book. Therefore, he sacrificed an excellent historical opportunity to mention the *enemy's* account of the good preparation of the Jordanian Army when all other Arab armies failed to do so. He also wasted the chance to state a fact that might be used as a defense against the suspicious and litigious Arabs about the role of Jordan in the war. But all these remain as speculations. It was not possible to get an answer from or meet with the translator (he died before this paper was written) to ask him about his strategy of translation in the particular example. However, the strategy of skipping sentences and sometimes paragraphs that the translator followed in his translation seemed to be consistent even if it is on the expense of Jordan, its army and its Prime Minister – the central character of the (translated) book. The following example proves this very point.

6. On page (17), ST. (The last paragraph):

*During the fighting in eastern Galilee, after the fall of Nazareth, **Tall, though wounded in the leg**, continued to lead his men. His valour was, however, of no avail.*

The translator did not translate the words that describe Wasfi's heroism in the battle despite being *wounded in his leg*. The key figure and protagonist in the book is Wasfi. One expects the translator to highlight his importance and heroism, and the facts about Wasfi's life. Al-Sa'd did not translate Wasfi's heroism mentioned in the ST. The sentence is a confirmation of the great courage of the Jordanian Prime Minister, the then soldier and leader, by an Israeli author, who was until 1994 (the signing of the Peace Agreement with Israel) the citizen of the *enemy state*. This shows the translator's ideological intervention. The translator was biased, different and not neutral.

7. On page (19), ST:

A third occasion of being inconsistent and distorting the ST, occurs on page (22) TT. The translator applies managing. He manipulates the text by changing the words *the Arab armies to the Jordanian Army (Arab Legion)*:

وأضاف أن خطة الهجوم لم تكن مبنية على مبدأ القوة الفاعلة ، فالجيش العربي الأردني تحرك ببطء وحذر مبالغ فيه ...

The ST author describes the movement of the **Arab armies** as:

"slow exaggerated caution":

Furthermore, **the Arab armies** moved slowly and with exaggerated caution, which allowed the Israeli forces to stop them with relative ease...

In normal situations, what is expected from a TT-Jordanian- translator, probably out of self-censorship, is to avoid any negative reference, if any, to the army of his country. But to associate the negative references to *the Arab armies* with the Jordanian Army (Arab Legion) (الجيش العربي الأردني), is perplexing. One of the translator's work colleagues explained from the long discussions with translator, this inconsistency in translation as consistency in Al-Sa'd's Ba'thist ideology. The Ba'th party, in Syria and Iraq, was not in good terms with Jordan. Therefore, "the negative managing here, I believe, is intentional", the work colleague added.

8. On page (24), ST:

...During this period, a lifelong, intimate relationship was established between Wafial-Tall and Musa's wife, Sa'dyya. She and Musa al-Alami were divorced in 1950, and Sa'dyya married Tall in 1951... **Sa'dyya was charming, intelligent and educated. She was the daughter of Ihsan Jabri, who was the head of one of the great Arab families of Aleppo, Syria, and a figure of eminence in the Arab world. (Sa'dyya was older than Wasfi al-Tall and they had no children).**

Al-Said, on page (28), TT, did not translate the references to Sa'diyya as *charming, intelligent and educated*, the references to Sa'diyya's father, to Sa'diyya's age, and the fact that she and Wasfi did not have children. Most likely, the translator was abiding by the social norms in the Jordanian society that preserves a respect for the private lives of people. It is socially prohibited in a familial, tribal-like-society to refer to one's wife, mother, sister publicly. In some areas in Jordan, people do not mention the name of female relatives publicly (though, nowadays, this is not as strict as it used to be). It is part of the unwritten agreed upon ethics of the society which nearly all members conform to. People instead, when forced to do so, refer to women by their nicknames: Umm (the mother of) X, the wife of Y, and the daughter of Abu (the father) of Z. It is most likely that the translator did not want to offend Al-Tall family or to violate the social norms. Therefore, his choice was to leave out the references to private lives and female names.

9. On page 32, ST:

Sawt al-Arab, in its broadcasts from Cairo,...accused the 'adolescent tyrant' for having brought about the murder of Majali by his policy of 'treachery' and it appealed to the Palestinians in Jordan to rise against the regime.

Susser refers to the descriptions of radio Sawt Al-'Arab (the Voice of the Arabs, broadcasts from Cairo, 31 Aug.-3 Sept.1960) of King Hussein. The radio used to refer to the King Hussein as: "the adolescent tyrant" and that the policy of deception is the reason for the assassination of Prime Minister Haza' Al-Majali. None of this was translated into Arabic. It is understandable in this case not to translate these sentences because they include direct accusations of and criticism to the king which is strictly not allowed in accordance with the Press and Publication law (PP),⁸ article 40 which prohibited any publication of: "news that touched on the monarch or the Royal Family."

10. On page 137, ST:

By holding the passenger hostage, the Fida'iyyun humiliated the Jordanian army, which seemed helpless (the hostages were only freed by the army two weeks later, during fighting in civil war).

In this example, the translator avoided the whole sentence because it was strictly not allowed, by the PP law, Article 40:⁹ "to publish any information about the armed forces unless the publication is authorised by a responsible authority in the Armed Forces."

11. On page 168 ST, page 138 TT:

His [Wasfi's] wife Sa'diyya, who was in the hotel at the time, rushed into the lobby screaming: 'Are you happy now, Arabs-sons of dogs!' A Jordanian officer knelt down at Tall's side and kissed his forehead, just after one of

the assassins had vented his hatred and lust for vengeance by licking Tall's blood as it poured from his wounds onto the marble floor. Four suspects were apprehended by the Egyptian authorities very shortly thereafter.

Susser describes in detail the scene right after Wasfi was shot at close range in the Sheraton Hotel in Cairo. This paragraph crystallizes the aim of this research paper. It illustrates the social and political problems of sensitive texts. It is replete with sensitive issues that were, and remain, problematic in the translation of Susser's Book. The scene can be divided into four parts: part (1) Sa'diyya's reaction to her husband's assassination, part (2) the Jordanian officer's reaction, part (3) the assassin's reaction, and part (4) detaining four suspects by the Egyptian authorities. The translator, due to different reasons, applied one strategy in dealing with this particular sensitive text: managing and skipping. In dealing with Sadiyya's reaction the moment she saw her husband assassinated, part (1):

*His [Wasfi's] wife Sa'diyya, who was in the hotel at the time, rushed into the lobby screaming: 'Are you happy now, **Arabs**-sons of dogs!'*

The translator rendered one part of the sentence – in bold type above – and skipped the other part: *[Arabs] sons of dogs!* He shifted the position of the word **Arabs** and placed it before the comma which gave the sentence a new meaning. The translator's sentence reads as: *Are you happy now **Arabs**.* The translator, then, ignored the final part of Sadiyya's sentence: *[Arabs] sons of dogs!* The sentence contains severe assault: "Arabs-sons of dogs", which is prohibited by the PP laws in Jordan. In addition, it is not socially accepted. In part two, the translator rendered the sentence: *A Jordanian officer knelt down at Tall's side and kissed his forehead* as: *في وقت انحنى ضابط ... أردني على الجثة و قبلها* the Literal/back translation would be: **At the same time a Jordanian officer knelt down and kissed the corpse**

Al-Sa'd used the expression: *في وقت* (at the same time) which is not in the ST. This addition gives the Arabic reader the impression that the reaction of the officer's was concurrent with that which preceded it (Sadiyya "rushed into the lobby screaming: 'Are you happy now, Arabs-sons of dogs!'") Whereas, Susser described a two-part reaction in the ST: one is Sa'diyya "rushed into the lobby screaming: 'Are you happy now, Arabs-sons of dogs!'" and the other is: "A Jordanian officer knelt down at Tall's side and kissed his forehead." the translator was not precise in rendering: "Tall's side and kissed his forehead" into: *انحنى ... على الجثة و قبله* (the back translation would be: he knelt on the **corpse** and kissed him [Wasfi]). Al-Sa'd did not mention the key words "kissed his forehead" which are overloaded with emotiveness: connotative meaning of these words illustrate high respect, care and love of the Jordanian officer. On the one hand, the connotation of the word *الجثة* (corpse) is neutral-negative. The choice of words diminishes the great deed of the officer who showed affection to his boss and prime minister. On the other hand, the choice of using the Arabic word *الجثة*, in Arabic, conveys disrespect to Wasfi himself. It makes no difference between Wasfi the assassinated-martyr and any other person or criminal killed in an accident or a shooting.

The translator skipped the parts about the assassin's reaction and the arrest of the suspects. Susser provides a description of the assassin's licking the blood of the assassinated Wasfi. "Al-Sa'd, as one of his friends puts it, "avoided provoking the feelings of hatred and enmity between Jordanians and Palestinians and call to mind the memories of the clashes of the 1970s once more. The assassin's reaction is not tolerable socially, politically, ethically, and religiously. The translator might have the social norms in mind when he decided, for good motives, as it seems, to manage the extremely offensive text.

4. Conclusion

Asher Susser's *On Both Banks of the Jordan: A Political Biography of Wasfi Al-Tall* and its Arabic translation exemplify translations from English into Arabic allowing us an opportunity to consider bi-directional translation and illustrate the problematic political and social issues. The translator of the target text tried to give his audience the full details of the biography of the prominent Jordanian politician Wasfi as presented by the source text author. Al-Sa'd, remained careful not to transgress the social and political guidelines of Arab/Jordanian society. Being aware of the sensitivity of the topic he is translating, Al-Sa'd tried not to breach the fine lines of the cultural norms applied in Jordan, as well as in most Arab countries. In spite of the translator's audacious attempt to tackle a thorny topic that involves social and political taboos, the translation fell short of conveying the importance of the ST as a political-social record of the most critical moments in the Jordanian-Arab modern political history. The translator avoided problematic words and sentences by opting for camouflage, or for adding

and deleting at other times. Furthermore, on a number of occasions, the translator skipped sentences and paragraphs that praised and described Wasfi's gallantry, although the book is all about Wasfi's life.

In most of the examples in the TT, the translator applied *intrinsic* managing (compensated for the mismatches between the ST and the TT) and *extrinsic* managing (ideologically intervened to adjust the message to fit with his own goals) (Farghal 1993: 2).

Notes

1. The accuracy of the Hebrew/Arabic/English translations of the book was checked thoroughly by an MA holder of Hebrew (a full time lecturer at Yarmouk University, Jordan) and by two Arab-Israeli citizen students at Jordan University of Science and Technology, Jordan.
2. Interview with General Dr. Qasem M. Saleh
3. For more details on taboo, see Douglass Robinson's *Translation and Taboo* (1996).
4. Interview with Dr. Mamdooh Al-Rousan Researcher and Chair of History Department, Yarmouk University, Jordan
5. Writers in daily newspapers such as: Yasser Za'treh, George Hadad, Ziyad Abu Ghaneemeh, and Ibrahim Al Absi (*Ad-Dustour Newspaper*); Sameeh Ma'ytah and Aawni Sadiq in (*Al-Ghad Newspaper*); Nahd Hattar, Fahed Khitan and Mohammed Ka'wash (*Al-Arab Al-Yawm Newspaper*). In weekly newspapers such as: Faraj Shalhooob (*As-Sabeel Newspaper*); Shaker Al-Jawhari (*Al-Haddath Newspaper*); Ibrahim Ghosheh (*Al-Majd Newspaper*); Jamal Zahran (*Al-Hilal Newspaper*); Jihad Al-Momani (*Shihan Newspaper*).
6. Interview in 2007 with Dr Mamdooh Al-Rousan (Former Head of History Department, Yarmouk University).
7. The Press and Publication Law of 1993 from "Text of Press, Publication Draft Law". *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, 19 March 1993.
8. The Press and Publication Law of 1993 from "Text of Press, Publication Draft Law". *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, 19 March 1993.
9. The Press and Publication Law of 1993 from "Text of Press, Publication Draft Law". *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, 19 March 1993.

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