

Ideological Repositioning of Christian Theology in Arabic Children's Translations of Dracula: Skopos, Domestication vs. Foreignization and Purification

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the translation of religious ideology in Arabic children's adaptations of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), focusing on the treatment of Christian symbols and theological concepts for Muslim child audiences. Drawing on Skopos theory, domestication and foreignization, and Klingberg's purification strategy, it analyzes selected excerpts from two Arabic editions (Pharosbooks, 2018; Dar Al Maaref, 2021). The findings identify four strategies: theological substitution, ideological neutralization, cultural domestication, and religious purification. The study argues that translators act as ideological mediators, reshaping the source text according to target-culture religious values, censorship norms, and publishing expectations. It highlights implications for translation pedagogy, publishing ethics, and children's literature scholarship in cross-cultural contexts.

Keywords:

Religious Ideology
Children's Literature
Translation
Dracula
Domestication and
Foreignization
Religious Purification

استراتيجيات إعادة صياغة الفكر الديني في الترجمات العربية للأطفال لرواية "دراكولا": مقارنة نقدية في ضوء نظريات الغرض والتوطين والتغريب والتنقية

هدي المزوجي

المخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في ترجمة الأيديولوجيا الدينية في التكييفات العربية الموجبة للأطفال لرواية برام ستوكر دراكولا (1897). مع التركيز على معالجة الرموز المسيحية والمفاهيم اللاهوتية بما يتناسب مع القراء الأطفال المسلمين. واستناداً إلى نظرية الغائية، والتدجين والتغريب، واستراتيجية التنقية لدى كلينغبرغ، تحلل الدراسة مقتطفات مختارة من طبعين عربيتين (Pharosbooks، 2018؛ دار المعارف، 2021). وتكشف النتائج عن أربع استراتيجيات رئيسية: الاستبدال اللاهوتي، والتحييد الأيديولوجي، والتدجين الثقافي، والتنقية الدينية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن المترجمين يؤدون دور الوسطاء الأيديولوجيين، إذ يعيدون تشكيل النص وفق القيم الدينية وثقافة المجتمع المستهدف، ومعايير الرقابة، ومتطلبات سوق النشر، مع إبراز آثار ذلك في تعليم الترجمة وأخلاقيات النشر ودراسات أدب الأطفال في السياقات متعددة الثقافات..

الكلمات المفتاحية:
الأيديولوجيا الدينية
ترجمة أدب الأطفال
دراكولا
التدجين والتغريب
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Introduction

The translation of children's literature across culturally and religiously divergent contexts engenders inquiries that transcend mere lexical correspondence or syntactic accuracy. According to Mouzughy (2025), a meticulous examination of narrative architectures enables researchers to derive significant insights regarding the developmental trajectory of children's comprehension faculties, concurrently facilitating the internalization of cultural mores and societal conventions.

When a source narrative is imbued with the theological symbolism of a singular religious tradition and necessitates adaptation for children audiences entrenched in a radically different belief system, the translator is invariably cast in the role of a cultural and ideological mediator. Few illustrative instances exemplify this phenomenon with greater clarity than the Arabic translation of Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) tailored for Arab children.

Stoker's narrative is fundamentally a profoundly Christian text. The principal conflict encapsulated within the narrative is not solely a struggle between human beings and a vampire but rather a confrontation between Christian civilization and malevolent evil, with the crucifix, the Eucharistic host, holy water, and sacred scriptures serving as tangible instruments against supernatural wickedness (Auerbach & Skal, 1997). The undertaking to render this narrative accessible for children's audiences within predominantly Muslim Arab environments, characterized by the recognition of Christianity as an esteemed but ultimately eclipsed belief system, where depictions of the sacred are governed by rigorous theological parameters, and where the literary engagement of children is subjected to considerable cultural and governmental oversight, represents a challenge laden with profound ideological implications.

This paper explores how Arab translators and adapters of *Dracula* handle the religious ideologies of the source text when producing children's editions. It poses three research questions: (1) Which religious ideological features are most prominent in the source text and its English children's abridgments? (2) What translation strategies do Arabic adapters use to interpret or address these features? (3) What do these strategies reveal about the ideological and cultural frameworks governing Arabic children's literary translation?

The paper contributes in three significant ways. First, it expands the growing academic discourse surrounding ideology in the translation of children's literature to an underexamined linguistic and cultural pairing, Arabic and English. Second, it employs a multi-faceted theoretical framework, integrating Skopos theory, Domestication/Foreignization theory, Purification Strategy and Critical Discourse Analysis, applied to a specific case study characterized by rich material amenable to analysis. Third, it enriches the dialogue regarding the ethical implications of ideological manipulation in texts crafted for child audiences, a demographic particularly vulnerable to the formative influence of translated narratives (Oittinen, 2000).

Literature Review

Ideology in Translation

Since the cultural turn of the 1980s and 1990s, ideology has remained firmly at the forefront of Translation Studies. The cultural turn fundamentally reconstituted translation studies by shifting its central question from "How should this be translated?" to "Why is it translated this way, and what does that tell us about the culture, power, and ideology behind the translation?" It transformed translation scholars from language evaluators into cultural critics and historians. Bassnett and Lefevere (1990, p. 8) posited that: translation is never neutral. It is, he argued, a form of "rewriting," and every rewrite carries the fingerprints of whoever has a stake in it, mainly translators, but also publishers, patrons, even censors. Venuti (1995) took that insight and gave it a sharper edge by exposing what he called the "ideology of fluency" in the English-speaking world. His argument, in essence, is that Anglo-American publishers tend to domesticate foreign texts until their otherness is smoothed away, leaving readers with the illusion that they have not read a translation at all. Yet as Pym (2012) has cautioned, the binary between domestication and foreignization risks oversimplifying the translator's actual decision-making environment, where pragmatic constraints, deadlines, client demands, target-audience expectations, often override any coherent ideological agenda. More recently, scholars like Munday and his colleagues (2022) have pushed further, insisting that translation cannot be separated from the messy realities of sociocultural politics and the mechanics of representation. And on the methodological side, Van Dijk's (1998) work on discourse and power has given translation researchers a practical toolkit for tracing how social hierarchies, class, race, religion, quietly reproduce themselves across linguistic boundaries.

Religious ideology, in particular, throws these issues into especially sharp relief. It is one thing to domesticate a French novel; it is quite another to render sacred or theologically charged material into a culture that does not share the same beliefs. Faiq (2004) has stated this clearly: when Islamic texts are translated into European languages, "western tongues," as he puts it, they often emerge distorted, not accidentally but systematically, thanks to lingering Orientalist assumptions that Western translators may not even recognize in themselves. In addition, "the Arab world and Islam are still translated or represented through monolingual eyes" (ibid. p.8). Hatim and Mason (1990) made a related but more linguistically technical point. Their argument is that traditional grammar-and-lexicon approaches simply miss the subtle ways discourse markers, a shift in register, a particular syntactic choice, can signal religious identity. You cannot catch those signals if you are only looking at sentences one by one. Selim (2009) has since added a historical and political dimension to the discussion, examining how colonial and postcolonial power structures have shaped the flow of religious texts between Arabic and European languages. What she finds is not a level playing field but a deeply uneven landscape, one where inequalities built over centuries continue to dictate which texts get translated, how they get translated, and for whom.

The Ideological Landscape of Children's Literature Translation

The translation of children's literature is remarkably intricate, as it necessitates navigating not only linguistic and cultural barriers but also specific developmental and pedagogical imperatives. Oittinen (2000:53) postulates that this process is an exercise in profound cultural mediation, where the translator's own culturally contingent understanding of 'childhood' dictates whether a text is adapted to protect or educate the young reader. This high degree of intervention is facilitated by the peripheral status of children's texts within the literary polysystem; as Shavit (1986 : 112) observes, this marginality provides translators with a level of 'translational freedom', often manifested as significant textual manipulation, that would be inadmissible in adult literature.

Recent scholarship has increasingly focused on the intersection of religious ideology and this translational flexibility. Lathey (2016) suggests that the systemic modification of religious references to suit target-culture sensibilities raises critical ethical concerns regarding 'domestication' and 'cultural imperialism', potentially depriving children of their right to engage

with authentic foreign perspectives. In Muslim-majority societies, this tendency is especially marked, as Sayaheen and Mahadi (2019) argue that translations of children's literature into Arabic often favor domestication and religious substitution to better reflect Islamic values and Arab cultural traditions.

Beyond the translator's individual choices, institutional gatekeepers, such as publishers, editors, and educators, play a decisive role in shaping the ideological message of translated content (Epstein, 2012 ; Mdallel, 2003). These authorities often refine or modify the text in deliberate ways. For instance, they may remove overtly religious passages or insert didactic material to ensure the story alignment with local moral expectations (Kansu-Yetkiner, 2014; Borodo, 2014). In addition, elements outside the main narrative, like titles, prefaces, and footnotes, are frequently used to impose a particular ideological perspective on the original work. Through this kind of peritextual framing, foreign stories get transformed into versions that feel socially or politically acceptable for the target audience (Ben-Ari, 2002).

Arabic Translation and Islamic Cultural Norms

In the Arabic-speaking world, translation is shaped by a distinctive set of factors, largely because Arabic holds a sacred status as the language of the Qur'an. As Aziz (1998) points out, this religious significance means that Arabic carries a spiritual weight not typically found in Western, secular translation traditions. As a result, when translators work on texts intended for general or educational purposes, they have to navigate a mix of Islamic theological principles, longstanding cultural norms, and the specific expectations of regional publishers (El-Shazly, 2007). This creates a kind of normative environment that strongly influences translation choices. For example, Elnemr et. al. (2023) shows that in Muslim-majority settings both state and religious ideologies can lead translators to significantly reform the theological content of a source text so that it fits more comfortably within local conventions.

Within children's literature, these ideological pressures often lead to a deliberate process of refinement or alteration. According to El-Shazly (2007), Egyptian publishers who act as influential regional gatekeepers,

frequently remove or revise Christian references in translated texts to align with local market expectations. In a similar vein, Mdalliel (2003) notes a strong didactic trend in Arabic translations of children's books, where any content seen as culturally out of place tends to be omitted. A

clear illustration of this can be found in Hassan's (2011) study of the Arabic translations of *Harry Potter*, which documents how references to Christian holidays and themes like witchcraft were toned down or removed altogether. These established strategies of religious adaptation offer a useful lens for examining more explicitly theological works, such as *Dracula*, where religious symbolism is not just an added detail but a core structural element.

***Dracula* as an Ideological Text**

Since the 1980s, the ideological landscape of *Dracula* has been a subject of rigorous academic inquiry. Auerbach and Skal (1997) identified the novel as a vessel for late-Victorian anxieties concerning gender roles, the erosion of imperial power, and religious stability. The theological underpinnings are particularly salient; Kirtley (1988) illustrated how Stoker integrated Catholic and Protestant folkloric traditions to establish Christian ritual as the primary weapon against the supernatural. Building on this, Wynne (2013) argued that the religious motifs, rooted in Stoker's own Irish Anglican heritage, are essential to the novel's structural integrity rather than being purely ornamental. More recently, Johnson (2024) has explored the novel's sacramental framework through the lens of religious obsession and fanaticism, indicating the ongoing relevance of its theological dimensions.

In the Arab world, the cultural reception of *Dracula* has been recontextualized through the lens of local folklore and sociopolitical dynamics. Alotaibi (2024) has recently examined how the vampire archetype is adapted in Egyptian and Saudi literary contexts, tracing the figure of *Dracula* within the works of Ahmed Khaled Tawfik (1962–2018), Egypt's pioneering novelist of horror, science fiction, and medical thrillers, often hailed as the "godfather" of Arabic popular fiction. Alotaibi (2024) demonstrates that Tawfik's narratives, spanning more than 200 books, frequently intertwine with Islamic notions of the jinn, using them as a vehicle for sharp political critique of both authoritarian regimes and zealous Islamist movements. These studies, however, have largely focused on the thematic and folkloric dimensions of *Dracula*'s Arab reception, paying comparatively little attention to the

linguistic and translational decisions that make such recontextualization possible. While recent linguistic studies have begun to deconstruct the translation of emotional registers in Arabic versions of the novel, a significant gap remains in the literature. Despite the growing interest in *Dracula*'s cultural migration, there is a lack of systematic research into how its intrinsic religious ideology is mediated when the text is adapted for an Arabic-speaking child audience. The current paper aims to address this scholarly lacuna.

Theoretical Framework

This paper utilizes a tripartite theoretical framework to investigate the translational strategies, communicative purposes, and ideological implications inherent in the Arabic adaptation of children's literature.

Skopos Theory

A useful point of departure is Vermeer's (1989) Skopos theory, which holds that the intended purpose, or skopos, of a translation constitutes the primary determinant of all translational decisions. Under this functionalist paradigm, the success of a translation is measured not by its fidelity to the source text in some absolute or decontextualized sense, but rather by its effectiveness within the target cultural environment. As Munday and his colleagues (2022) observe, this framework shifts the analytical focus away from formal equivalence toward functional utility, a shift whose implications are particularly far-reaching when the source narrative is as ideologically dense as Stoker's *Dracula*. In the domain of children's literature, the skopos is rarely singular; it typically comprises a synthesis of entertainment, education, and social initiation, with the crucial qualification that these priorities are mediated by adults acting on behalf of the child reader (Nord, 1997). Daud et al. (2021) provide empirical support for this functionalist approach in their study of Malay translations, where purpose-driven adaptations were shown to enhance rather than undermine cultural coherence. For the Arabic editions of *Dracula* examined here, the operative skopos appears to be twofold: to deliver an engaging adventure narrative while simultaneously neutralizing religiously sensitive content, thereby aligning the text with the socio-religious expectations of an Arab-Muslim audience.

Domestication and Foreignization

Complementing this functionalist framework is Venuti's (1995) influential distinction between domestication and foreignization. Domestication refers to the set of strategies that minimize the perceived "foreignness" of a source text

by assimilating it to target-culture norms; foreignization, by contrast, deliberately preserves those cultural markers, forcing the reader to confront the otherness of the originating context. Venuti's essential insight, and it is one that bears repeating, is that neither approach is ideologically neutral. Domestication risks erasing cultural difference, effectively subsuming the foreign text into local paradigms, while foreignization, though potentially a gesture of respect toward the source culture, may simply bewilder an unprepared reader. When the text in question is a work of children's literature saturated with Christian symbolism, the stakes become unusually high. A domesticating strategy typically entails the omission or substitution of Christian references, replacing a crucifix with a sword, for instance, or deleting an invocation of divine protection. A foreignizing strategy, by contrast, would retain such elements, perhaps supplemented by paratextual apparatuses such as footnotes, prefaces, or glossaries. Neither path is without difficulty; each represents a distinct ideological posture toward the work of translation itself.

Purification in Children's Translation

Klingberg (1986) offers a more specific and, for present purposes, more immediately applicable concept: the 'purification strategy'. By this he means the deletion or rewriting of textual elements that conflict with the values of adult gatekeepers, parents, publishers, religious authorities, educators, who exercise oversight over children's reading material. Purification must be distinguished from modernization, which aims to increase comprehensibility; purification is driven not by pedagogical considerations but by ideological ones. Its purpose is to align the text with the moral, religious, and educational standards deemed appropriate for young readers. The typical targets are readily identifiable: religious references (deities, prayers, exclamations, rituals), sexual content, violence, bodily functions, and social taboos more broadly. Translators have at their disposal a range of techniques: deletion (excising a problematic word or passage entirely), rewording (softening offensive or ideologically troublesome language), substitution (replacing a Christian reference with an Islamic equivalent), insertion (adding explicit moral or religious instruction), and what Klingberg terms 'bleaching', the neutralization of specific religious content while retaining a general sense, as when 'pray to the saints' becomes simply 'ask for help'. A critical observation is in order here.

Klingberg himself strongly disapproves of purification, regarding it as both unnecessary and intellectually dishonest. His argument runs as follows:

purification hinders children's capacity to develop an authentic understanding of other cultures, and it constitutes a falsification of the original text. If a book fundamentally clashes with target-culture values, he advises either refraining from translating it at all or translating it in its entirety without purifications. This is a principled position, yet it arguably underestimates the commercial and institutional pressures that shape the children's publishing industry, particularly in markets where religious authorities exercise considerable oversight. For analytical purposes, however, Klingberg's value lies not in his moral prescriptions but in the precise vocabulary he supplies for identifying what has been altered and how. As the analysis of the Arabic children's editions of *Dracula* will demonstrate, evidence of purification, across all five of Klingberg's categories, is pervasive.

Methodology

The research data for this paper comprise two distinct Arabic adaptations of *Dracula* specifically tailored for children's audiences. The first is a simplified retelling released in 2018 by Pharosbooks, a Cairo-based publisher; the second is a more contemporary version published in 2021 by Dar Al Maaref in Beirut, a publisher recognized for its culturally approach to children's fiction.

Methodologically, the study synthesizes four key theoretical frameworks from translation studies and children's literature adaptation. From Vermeer's (1989) Skopos theory, the analysis adopts the principle that translational choices are guided by the intended function of the target text within its receiving context, here, entertainment and cultural acceptability for Muslim Arab children. Lefevere's (1992) concept of 'rewriting' provides a lens for understanding how ideological constraints shape the adaptation process, particularly the ways religious elements are systematically modified to align with dominant cultural norms. Klingberg's (1986) purification model offers a more specific framework for analyzing the omission or replacement of religious content that conflicts with the target audience's beliefs, while Venuti's (1995) domestication theory illuminates the broader strategy of rendering foreign texts intelligible by subordinating source-cultural specificity to target-cultural familiarity. These theoretical perspectives inform three analytical categories applied to elements characterized by a high density of religious symbolism: the crucifix, the Eucharistic wafer, and Van Helsing's invocations:

Theological Substitution (drawing on Lefevere) and Purification (drawing on Klingberg), respectively: The former involves the replacement of Christian-

specific elements with Islamic or non-denominational religious terminology; the latter involves the complete omission of religious content that directly conflicts with the target audience's beliefs.

Ideological Neutralization (extending Vermeer's *Skopos*): The transformation of religious content into secular narrative beats to prioritize entertainment and cultural acceptability. Cultural Domestication (grounded in Venuti): The integration of target-culture values or familiar Arabic narrative conventions, often at the expense of source-text specificity.

The analysis that follows applies this integrated framework systematically to identify patterns of ideological mediation across the two editions, examining how each scholar's concepts illuminate different dimensions of the same translational phenomenon.

Analysis and Discussion

The Crucifix as a Weapon: Theological Substitution

The following analysis examines the translational mediation of one of Stoker's most prominent religious motifs: the crucifix as a functional instrument of supernatural defense. In the source text, the crucifix is depicted as possessing intrinsic, objective power derived from Catholic dogma. It acts as a physical deterrent that burns the vampire upon contact, with Van Helsing's explanations explicitly grounding this efficacy in 'the power of the Church' and the sacramental 'mercy of God' (Stoker, 1897).

The Arabic adaptations handle this key theological motif in different ways, primarily through substitution and the elimination of overt religious references. In the *Dar Al-Maaref* version, the crucifix is consistently rendered as a *ta'wīdhā* (talisman) (2021, pp. 10, 36, 55), transforming it from a distinctly Christian symbol into a more generalized object of spiritual protection. This adaptation shifts Van Helsing's original explanation away from Christian doctrine and toward a broader belief in protective charms, a notion that resonates more readily with many Arab readers. Consequently, references to specifically Christian concepts, including the authority of the Church and Christ's redemptive sacrifice, are removed and replaced with more culturally neutral expressions. This results in a significant change in register: the explicitly religious discourse of the source text gives way to a culturally grounded register that is more compatible with the expectations and beliefs of a predominantly Muslim target audience.

By contrast, the Pharosbook Publisher adaptation (2018) preserves the explicit reference to the crucifix by using the term *al-salib* (the cross) (pp.18, 36). However, it subtly reinterprets the source text's theological framework. Rather than presenting the crucifix as a sacred object possessing inherent supernatural power, the adaptation suggests that its effectiveness derives from the faith of the person who carries it. This shift represents a significant ideological adjustment. The source text attributes protective power directly to the crucifix as a holy Christian symbol, whereas the Arabic adaptation relocates that power to the believer's inner faith. In doing so, the translator reduces the emphasis on the sanctity of the physical object itself and instead foregrounds personal belief as the true source of spiritual protection. Such a reinterpretation resonates more closely with Islamic teachings, which stress the centrality of *iman* (faith) and discourage attributing independent power to material objects. Consequently, the adaptation retains the narrative function of the crucifix while reshaping its theological meaning to align more comfortably with the cultural and religious expectations of its target readership.

These translational choices illustrate what Venuti (1995) terms domestication, although the changes extend beyond the replacement of individual words or expressions. Rather than modifying only the surface language of the text, the adaptations reshape the deeper religious framework that governs how the narrative operates. In Stoker's original novel, the crucifix possesses an inherent sacred power derived from Christian sacramental belief; its effectiveness does not depend on the personal faith or spiritual state of the person using it. The object itself is understood to embody a divine force capable of repelling evil. In the Arabic adaptations, however, this theological principle is reinterpreted. The protective power associated with the crucifix is either transferred to a more culturally acceptable object or made dependent on the faith and conviction of the individual who carries it. As a result, the source text's notion of objective sacred efficacy is replaced by a more subjective understanding in which belief becomes the primary source of protection. This shift reflects a worldview that is more compatible with Islamic conceptions of divine protection, where efficacy is generally linked to faith in God rather than to the intrinsic sanctity of a physical object.

Hence, while these adaptations may initially appear to merely neutralize or reduce explicit Christian references, they in fact perform a more substantive ideological transformation. The translators do not simply delete theological

content; rather, they actively reconstruct the source text's religious framework according to the cultural and doctrinal assumptions of their target Muslim Arab readership. This reconstruction operates across two primary dimensions: substitution and reinterpretation.

Substitution involves replacing Christian sacred objects with culturally familiar equivalents, as seen in the Dar Al-Maaref edition's rendering of the crucifix as a ta'wīdhā (talisman) (2021, pp. 10, 36, 55) or its replacement of the Eucharistic wafer with garlic flowers described in medicinal rather than sacramental terms (2021, p. 43).

Reinterpretation, exemplified by the Pharosbook Publisher version, preserves the original term al-salib (the cross) (2018, pp. 18, 36) but fundamentally alters the source of the object's protective power, shifting it from the intrinsic sanctity of the crucifix itself to the personal faith of the individual who carries it. The consequence of these twin strategies is a narrative that remains coherent and engaging for young Arabic readers while functioning within a theological paradigm aligned with Islamic teachings. This alignment is particularly evident in the rejection of objective sacred efficacy, the notion that a material object possesses inherent supernatural power independent of the believer's relationship with God. Islamic theology, rooted in the principle of tawḥīd (divine unity), discourages attributing independent agency to physical objects, locating protective power instead in sincere faith (iman) and reliance upon God (tawakkul). By substituting or reinterpreting the crucifix accordingly, the Arabic adaptations render Stoker's vampire narrative legible and acceptable within a Muslim cultural framework. Thus, adaptation emerges not merely as a linguistic or cultural process but as a form of ideological negotiation, one that reconfigures the original text's religious worldview to accommodate the beliefs, expectations, and gatekeeping concerns of its new audience.

The Eucharistic Wafer: Ideological Neutralization

In *Dracula*, the Eucharistic wafer (the consecrated Host used in Christian communion) functions as one of the most powerful sacred objects against vampirism. Its value derives from its status as the body of Christ according to Catholic doctrine, making it an explicitly Christian symbol with inherent supernatural power. Within the novel's theological framework, the wafer's effectiveness does not depend on the user's personal faith but on its objective sacred nature.

In Arabic adaptations for children, however, this element is often subject to ideological neutralization. Rather than presenting the wafer as a specifically Christian sacrament, the translator of the Dar Al-Maaref version (2021: 43) replaces it with a generic protective object: a bunch of garlic flowers, whose effect is described as medicinal, thereby omitting its religious origin. Through this strategy, the narrative retains its plot function, protection against Dracula, while minimizing or removing the doctrinal content associated with Christianity.

Neutralization functions as a mechanism of domestication at the ideological level. It can be understood as a form of cultural adaptation in which potentially sensitive religious references are reshaped to align with the target audience's expectations and beliefs. The result is a transformation of the original text's theological structure: a distinctly Christian sacramental object becomes a culturally neutral magical or protective device. Consequently, the adaptation preserves narrative coherence while reducing the visibility of the Christian ideology embedded in the source text.

Ideological neutralization illustrates how children's adaptations often prioritize cultural acceptability over theological fidelity. In doing so, it reflects the translator's role as a mediator between the source text's religious worldview and the target audience's cultural and ideological norms.

The Pharosbook Publisher adaptation (2018, pp. 27, 136) goes further in retaining the concept of a sacred object but replaces the Host with a blessed amulet (تعويذة مباركة). This substitution inadvertently introduces an alternate religious framework: protective amulets in Arab folk practice are linked to Islamic traditions of Ruqya (spiritual healing). The result is a form of domestication that supplants Christian sacramental theology with an Islamic folk-religious counterpart, a change that facilitates a coherent reading experience for Arab child readers but signifies a comprehensive ideological transformation of the original text.

Al-Adwan's (2012) perspective on ideological adaptation helps explain why translators of the Arabic children's editions of *Dracula* replace explicitly Christian elements, such as the crucifix or the Eucharistic wafer, with culturally neutral or generically spiritual substitutes. The objective extends beyond simply avoiding offense to young Muslim readers; it actively realigns the story with their cultural framework and lived experience. This alignment serves a dual purpose: making the text feel familiar and acceptable to child readers while also reassuring the adults (parents, educators, publishers) who mediate their literary consumption. Such adjustments reflect a broader trend in translated children's literature, where the priority shifts from strict fidelity

to the source text toward fostering resonance with the target audience's values, beliefs, and expectations. Within this framework, adapting religious imagery functions not as an act of distortion or omission but as a thoughtful, reader-oriented strategy, one that prioritizes cultural intelligibility over theological precision.

Van Helsing's Invocations: Neutralization and Purification

Van Helsing pretty much appoints himself the novel's religious explainer. He interprets everything strange or supernatural through a Catholic, and more broadly Christian, lens. He is forever throwing out phrases like 'God be with us' or 'In the name of the Father,' plus praying at length. All that language signals that the story, in its original form, is deeply rooted in Christian theology."

The Dar Al-Maaref edition (2021) largely effaces this dimension by neutralizing the invocations into generalized spiritual expressions. For instance, "Good God" (p. 60) is rendered as "يا إلهي" and "my God" (p.47) is rendered as "يا الله", thereby stripping away explicit Christian reference. Formal prayers are either omitted or condensed into culturally neutral appeals for divine assistance, while references to the Trinity and Christological elements are excised altogether.

A similar strategy of theological neutralization appears in the Pharosbook Publisher version (2018). Like the Dar Al-Maaref version, this edition systematically removes explicit Christian markers from the narrative, replacing them with generically spiritual or culturally familiar expressions. Invocations such as "God be with us" or "in the name of the Father" are reframed as more neutral pleas. For instance, "My God" (pp. 94, 136) is rendered as "يا إلهي," stripping away Trinitarian or specifically Catholic connotations. Lengthier formal prayers are either shortened into brief, non-denominational appeals for help or omitted entirely. The effect is a version of *Dracula* that preserves the surface-level sense of characters seeking divine aid but removes the distinctly Christian theological framework that Van Helsing and others rely upon, making the supernatural conflict feel less anchored in a specific religious worldview.

The two Arabic children's editions of *Dracula* examined here apply Klingberg's (1986) purification model, which permits translators of children's literature to omit terms or concepts that conflict with the target culture's religious framework. Consequently, both adaptations remove all Christian references to seeking help from Jesus or other heavenly figures.

These omissions are driven by a foundational principle of Islamic monotheism: the belief in God's absolute singularity (tawḥīd). Within this theological framework, invoking any figure other than God as an object of petition or source of supernatural aid risks compromising the core doctrine that divine power belongs to God alone. Klingberg considers such purification acceptable as a means of protecting young readers from beliefs that contradict their own religious upbringing, thereby preventing cognitive dissonance or confusion. Yet he also cautions that excessive deletion carries its own risks: when translators strip away too many culturally specific elements, they may weaken the original text's religious and cultural identity to the point where the narrative's internal logic or

thematic coherence becomes obscured. In the case of *Dracula*, this tension between protecting the child reader and preserving the source text's theological framework is particularly acute, given that the novel's vampire mythology is so deeply intertwined with Christian sacramental imagery, from the protective power of the crucifix to the apotropaic function of the Eucharistic wafer.

Broader Patterns: The Ideology of Translation Choices

Across the two adaptations, clear patterns emerge that expose the ideological motivations driving these translations. In both cases, maintaining narrative flow takes precedence over theological precision. Religious elements are retained only when they serve the plot, while their doctrinal depth is either diluted or removed altogether. This implies that the primary objective, or Skopos, in Vermeer's terms, is entertainment, with cultural socialization functioning as a secondary concern. Vermeer's (1989) Skopos theory offers a useful framework here: translation choices are guided by what the target context requires of the text. Comparable findings appear in Wang and Qian's (2023) analysis of Harry Potter translations through the lens of reception aesthetics; they found that translators similarly sacrificed cultural specificity to enhance reader engagement, a pattern that appears to persist across different literary traditions.

A second pattern is the directional logic of modification. Explicitly Christian references are systematically replaced with either generalized monotheistic phrasing or language resonant with Islamic discourse. This asymmetry underscores the ideological work of the translations, which do not merely excise religion but actively reposition it to align with the dominant faith tradition of the target culture. Lefevere's (1992) notion of ideological 'rewriting' is particularly apt here, as the Arabic versions reshape the novel's

theological framework to produce material deemed suitable for Muslim Arab children. Tian (2023), in a broader analysis of domestication and foreignization strategies, highlights this kind of theological repositioning as an underexplored dimension of domestication, one with significant ideological implications.

Finally, these translational choices reflect institutional as much as individual agency. The prominence of Cairo-based publishers in the Arab children's book market (El-Shazly, 2007), coupled with the cultural conservatism of their readership, helps explain why even the relatively more transparent Dar Al-Maaref edition ultimately domesticates the source text's religious ideology rather than presenting it unmediated. The alternative edition, published by Pharosbooks in Cairo, exhibits an even more pronounced pattern of substitution and neutralization. Elnemr's (2023) study illuminates the broader dynamic: Islamic governance frameworks across much of the Arab world which restrict the ideological range available to translators of foreign works for local audiences.

Findings and Recommendations

The implications of this study extend beyond the specific case of *Dracula*. From the perspective of translation theory, the findings suggest that ideological intervention in children's literature often operates at a structural level, reshaping the religious worldview of a text rather than merely altering individual lexical or cultural elements. While the concepts of domestication and foreignization remain useful, they do not fully account for the systematic transformation of religious meaning observed in these adaptations. The study therefore points to the need for analytical frameworks that can better explain the relationship between translation, ideology, and cultural mediation, particularly in texts with a strong theological dimension.

This paper also carries significant implications for translation education. It underscores the need to equip translators with the critical skills necessary to assess the ideological consequences of their decisions, particularly when working with religious material. Existing ethical frameworks, which emphasize responsibility toward young readers, may be expanded to address the complexities of translating across divergent religious traditions. Furthermore, translators' personal beliefs may inadvertently shape their work, making self-awareness an essential component of professional competence. Consequently, training programs ought to incorporate targeted instruction in religious translation, prompting practitioners to reflect on how they navigate not only linguistic choices but also cultural and theological worldviews.

Without such pedagogical interventions, the kind of ideological repositioning documented in this study, however well-intentioned may continue to operate beneath the threshold of critical awareness.

Beyond translation theory and pedagogy, this paper also speaks to the field of children's literature studies. It demonstrates that translated works in the Arab region frequently operate as instruments of cultural and religious socialization. The modifications to religious references observed in the aforementioned adaptations of *Dracula* are not accidental; rather, they are a calculated feature of the publishing process, designed to promote a specific cultural identity through literature. These findings reinforce what many scholars have long argued: children's literature serves as a potent medium for conveying norms and values. Translation, no less than original writing, helps determine how young readers from diverse cultures perceive the world around them.

Conclusion

This paper has explored how religious ideology is negotiated in Arabic children's adaptations of *Dracula*, focusing on the strategies employed by translators and publishers to render a text deeply embedded in Christian theological discourse accessible to Muslim Arab child readers. The analysis reveals a spectrum of translational practices, ranging from theological substitution and ideological neutralization to cultural domestication. These strategies collectively demonstrate how the Christian framework of the source text is reshaped, muted, or reframed in order to align with the religious formation of the target audience, the cultural and regulatory norms of the Arab publishing industry, and the overarching goals of producing literature that entertains while also socializing children into culturally appropriate values. These findings contribute to ongoing debates concerning ideology in the translation of children's literature. The analysis demonstrates the explanatory value of Vermeer's Skopos theory (1989), as translators' decisions are closely linked to the intended function of the adaptations within the target culture. The study also confirms the continuing relevance of domestication and foreignization as analytical frameworks and illustrates Klingberg's (1986) notion of purification through the systematic modification of religiously marked elements. More importantly, the case of *Dracula* suggests that religious ideology may constitute a foundational component of a literary work rather than a peripheral feature. Texts of this kind therefore provide a particularly fruitful context for examining how translation negotiates cultural and religious difference.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, this paper also raises important ethical questions about how cultural and religious difference is represented in children's literature. While the domestication strategies identified in the analyzed adaptations may be justified by prevailing cultural norms and market considerations, they can limit young readers' opportunities to encounter and engage critically with unfamiliar belief systems and cultural practices. The explanatory footnotes can be a possible approach in explaining theological terminology. By preserving the religious framework of the source text while providing contextual support for child readers, such strategies can encourage greater cross-cultural understanding and broaden children's literary and imaginative experiences.

Future research could extend this study in several directions. First, examining a larger corpus of Arabic translations of religiously marked English-language children's texts would enable a more systematic analysis of translational strategies and ideological tendencies. Second, reception studies involving Arab child readers could provide valuable insights into how these adaptations are interpreted and understood by their intended audience. Third, comparative research on the translation of Islamic children's literature into European languages would offer a useful perspective on the ideological and cultural dynamics that shape cross-religious translation in different contexts. Such work could reveal not only the constraints operating within Arab publishing environments but also the ways in which European Christian or secular frameworks mediate Islamic content for young readers. Collectively, these lines of inquiry would contribute to a broader understanding of translation as a site of ideological negotiation in children's literature.

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