



Universidad Nacional de Catamarca - Facultad de Humanidades
Instituto de Investigación en Teorías del Arte y Estética
Revista Rigel – ISSN 2525-1945.

Reception Horizons and Textual Transformations in the Jordanian Family Library Edition of Moby-Dick

A Comparative Critical Study in Light of Reception Aesthetics and Theories of Discourse and Translation

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Received: 16/04/2026

Accepted: 12/06/2026

Published: 30/09/2026

Abstract

This article examines the textual and institutional conditions that shaped the entry of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) into the Arabic literary sphere. It focuses on the 2009 edition issued by the Jordanian Ministry of Culture within the Family Library and Reading for All project, prepared and introduced by Dr Rihab Akkawi. The study challenges two familiar, but equally reductive, assumptions: that popular institutional editions necessarily corrupt or betray the works they circulate, and that institutional mediation can ever be transparent or ideologically neutral. It argues instead that the Jordanian edition exemplifies a complex form of accessible translation, in which the drive to make a demanding classic available to a broad readership comes into tension with the novel's resistance to simplification.

That tension provides the guiding thread of the article. At the level of the paratext, the edition seeks to reassure a family-oriented reader by reframing the work through its introduction, institutional presentation, and revised chapter titles. Within the narrative itself, however, Melville's material, comic, racial, religious, and political energies repeatedly resist domestication. To trace this movement between accommodation and resistance, the study brings together Hans Robert Jauss's theory of reception and the horizon of expectations, Umberto Eco's account of interpretive negotiation and the Model Reader, and Henri Meschonnic's historical poetics of rhythm. A juxtaposed reading of four episodes—Queequeg's genealogy, the wheelbarrow and maritime rescue, Nantucket's mythic-commercial geography, and the sensory



culture of chowder—shows how the translation negotiates semantic fidelity, rhetorical compensation, and ideological containment. The edition does not simply make *Moby-Dick* easier; it constructs a particular route by which an Arabic reader may enter its difficulty.

Keywords: Herman Melville; Rihab Akkawi; *Moby-Dick*; reception aesthetics; horizon of expectations; Hans Robert Jauss; Umberto Eco; Henri Meschonnic; rhythm of discourse; institutional translation; accessible translation.

1. Theoretical and Critical Premise: World Classics in Institutional Hands

Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (1851) is one of modern literature's most difficult works to reduce to a single category or a routine reading experience. It is not merely an exciting sea adventure organized around the tragic pursuit of a gigantic white whale. It is a densely layered discursive structure in which epic narrative intersects with ethnographic description; encyclopedic anatomy with Puritan sermonizing; Shakespearean tragedy with philosophical comedy; and radical criticism of imperial power with the unsettled racial and class identities of the United States on the eve of the Civil War. The aesthetic and intellectual difficulty of Melville's novel is not a detachable stylistic inconvenience. It is central to the way the work thinks and moves.

The narrative repeatedly interrupts its own forward motion in order to dwell on ropes, harpoons, port geographies, pagan rituals, and the food served in seamen's inns. In doing so, it confronts the reader with an excess of meaning that resists quiet, linear consumption. The question, then, is not simply whether another language can reproduce the information contained in the novel. It is whether the translation can preserve something of the novel's movement: its shifts of register, its abrupt tonal turns, its physical density, and its refusal to let the reader settle comfortably into a single interpretive position.

When such a text enters another language through the gateway of mass institutional publishing—more specifically, through the Jordanian Ministry of Culture's 2009 Family Library and Reading for All project, in an edition prepared and introduced by Dr Rihab Akkawi—the translational situation becomes unusually complex. This is not an edition addressed primarily to specialists in comparative literature or to graduate students in translation studies. It presents itself in the public sphere as an affordable book intended to enter the home. It was supported by the state and sold at a highly symbolic price: thirty-five Jordanian piastres.

This institutional setting gives the article its central problem: how was Melville's encyclopedic, strange, and often satirical text mediated for an imagined mass readership whose horizon was

explicitly familial, pedagogical, and broadly enlightening? Did the institutional frame and the renaming of chapters cut away the novel's material density, domesticate its racial and religious differences, and convert its shocks into reassuring lessons? Or did the translated text, despite the pressures of the series, preserve enough of Melville's world to confront Arabic readers with its unsettling force?

The study approaches these questions through close textual juxtaposition rather than impressionistic judgment. Its guiding thread is the relation between framing and resistance: the paratext often calms the reader before the narrative has had a chance to disturb them, while the narrative repeatedly reopens the very tensions that the frame appears to have resolved. Jauss, Eco, and Meschonnic provide three complementary ways of following that movement.

2. Critical Framework

2.1 Hans Robert Jauss: Horizon of Expectations and Aesthetic Distance

In *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (1967/2016), Hans Robert Jauss argues that classical and Marxist literary theories impoverished the vitality of literature when they treated it within a closed circuit of production and representation. To remove from literature "the effect produced by the literary work and the meaning given to it by the public—in other words, its reception"—is to deprive it of its social and aesthetic function. A literary work does not descend into an epistemological vacuum. Readers encounter it through a horizon of expectations, historically shaped by previous reading experiences, genre conventions, and linguistic traditions.

For Jauss, art is not exhausted by the passive confirmation of what is already familiar. Its originality depends in part on the aesthetic distance it creates: the interval between an established expectation and a work that disrupts it. Art can therefore break the routines of everyday perception and open the reader to a different apprehension of the world. This concept is particularly useful here. The question is whether Akkawi's edition reduces Moby-Dick's aesthetic distance in the interests of smooth consumption, or whether it leaves sufficient room for the novel's strangeness to challenge the reader's inherited assumptions.

The issue is not whether an accessible edition should be difficult for its own sake. Rather, accessibility becomes culturally meaningful only when it does not confuse comprehension with domestication. A reader may be guided into an unfamiliar work without being protected from every unfamiliarity the work contains.

2.2 Umberto Eco: Interpretive Negotiation and the Model Reader

In his writings on interpretation and translation, including *The Role of the Reader* (1979), *The Limits of Interpretation* (1990), and *Experiences in Translation* (2001), Umberto Eco insists that translation is not a mechanical comparison between two linguistic systems. It is an interpretation of a living text in two languages and, consequently, a movement between cultures and encyclopedias. As Eco puts it, "Translation is not about comparing two languages, but about the interpretation of a text in two different languages, thus involving a shift between cultures" (2001, p. 5).

Translation therefore proceeds through negotiation. The translator may relinquish a surface lexical or referential feature in order to preserve a deeper textual effect or intention—the work's *intentio operis*. Such negotiation is inseparable from the reader whom the translation imagines. Eco's Model Reader is not simply an actual person; it is a set of competences that the text anticipates and helps to construct. Literary texts are "lazy machines," full of gaps and unstated regions, inviting a reader to cooperate with them and fill those gaps from a shared cultural encyclopedia.

This perspective raises a precise question about Akkawi's edition: what kind of Model Reader does it construct? Does it imagine a reader who needs every unfamiliar element neutralized, or one who can be offered explanatory support while still being allowed to encounter difference? The answer is visible in the relationship between the chapter titles, the notes, and the translated narrative. The titles frequently offer a stable interpretive orientation; the body of the text often complicates it.

2.3 Henri Meschonnic: Rhythm, Historicity, and the Ethics of Translating

Henri Meschonnic's work, especially *Critique of Rhythm* (1982) and the essays collected in *The Henri Meschonnic Reader* (2019), challenges the reduction of translation to the transfer of a stable signified. Such a reduction detaches the text from its historicity and turns it into information that can be summarized, replaced, or exchanged without loss. Drawing on Émile Benveniste's account of rhythm as a "form in movement," Meschonnic understands rhythm as the organization of the subject in discourse and the organization of living meaning.

From this perspective, the ethics of translating depends on listening to what a text does in language, not merely on identifying what it says at the level of vocabulary. Rhythm, emphasis, recurrence, syntactic pressure, and the sensory materiality of words are not decorative additions. They are where the historical subject of the text becomes audible. Meschonnic's

approach therefore enables us to ask whether the edition treats *Moby-Dick* as a system of detachable signs or attends to the novel's shifts of pace, tonal friction, and physical presence.

These three approaches form the article's method. Jauss helps us examine the reader's expectations and the aesthetic distance created or reduced by the edition. Eco helps us understand the institutional and translational choices as acts of negotiation directed toward a Model Reader. Meschonnic keeps the analysis from stopping at thematic equivalence by directing attention to rhythm, sound, texture, and the force of language in motion.

3. Institutional Paratexts and the Horizon of Reading for All

A reader does not encounter a novel in complete isolation from its material presentation. Covers, institutional logos, introductions, notes, titles, and other paratexts guide the first approach to the work and help establish a horizon of expectations. The 2009 Jordanian edition is especially revealing because its institutional identity is not incidental. It belongs directly to the Family Library and Reading for All project. The book is presented neither as a commercial product aimed at profit nor as a specialized scholarly object. It appears instead as a subsidized public service intended to cultivate a reading culture in the home.

The back cover describes the series as a low-cost popular edition available to Jordanian families, with the goal of establishing a library in every household. It connects the project to the dissemination of culture and knowledge, the transmission of the nation's cultural and civilizational heritage across generations, and communication with human cultures. It also places the effort within an explicitly enlightening and developmental state project. This discourse constructs what may be called the family Model Reader: an imagined recipient seeking ethical education, balanced knowledge, and a calm form of intercultural communication that supports shared belonging and social advancement.

The institutional frame becomes more complicated when it houses a radical work such as *Moby-Dick*. Melville's novel is marked by metaphysical rebellion, existential mockery of religious institutions, destructive obsession, and a decentering of Western authority through pagan and grotesque worlds. The result is a structural tension between the rebellious character of the work and the reassuring character of the container in which it is offered.

The designation "prepared and introduced by Dr Rihab Akkawi," printed in the publication data, is important in this regard. The mediation does not present itself as a neutral, word-for-word linguistic transfer. The term "prepared" authorizes a pedagogical balancing act between the

violence of the source text and the needs of a general readership. It signals that the edition has been shaped, not merely carried across.

The first major instrument of this shaping is Akkawi's extended introduction, which directs the reader toward a relatively stable symbolic and ethical interpretation. The novel's complex architecture is condensed into a cosmic conflict between two forces: the whale as an emblem of brute or overwhelming power, fate, or evil, and Captain Ahab as the figure of human will and tragic pride. The existential uncertainty and narrative fragmentation associated with Ishmael's shifting voice recede behind a more settled epic frame, one that is easier to accommodate within a family-oriented reading culture.

The second instrument is the system of revised chapter titles. Instead of retaining Melville's descriptive, technical, or comic headings—"Biographical," "Wheelbarrow," and "Chowder"—the edition offers titles such as "Descendant of Kings," "The Shared World," and "The Fish Dish." These titles do more than identify a topic or event. They perform a preliminary interpretive act. They reduce uncertainty, frame the shock in familiar terms, and attempt to narrow the aesthetic distance on which Melville's writing depends.

Yet the paratext does not have the final word. The central claim of this article is that the frame and the narrative do not fully coincide. The frame seeks to make the novel safe to enter; the narrative continues to carry materials that are difficult to contain. The remainder of the study follows this conflict across four episodes.

4. Comparative Juxtaposition: Domestication and Resistance in the Narrative

4.1 Queequeg's Genealogy: Undoing the Binary of Civilization and Savagery

Queequeg occupies a crucial position in Melville's dismantling of Western centrality and in his exposure of the conventional "noble savage" paradigm. The edition's title, "Descendant of Kings," offers the reader an immediate frame of hereditary dignity. It places Queequeg within a familiar vocabulary of lineage, honor, and noble descent, thereby making his difference less threatening. But the translated passages themselves repeatedly exceed that frame.

The description of Rokovoko preserves the paradox of a place that is absent from every map because "true places never are." The invented island remains geographically unlocatable, and the translation retains the epistemological tension between cartographic authority and existential truth. Queequeg's father is presented as a high chief and a king, while his uncle is a

high priest; yet his royal blood is said to be “slightly bleached with cannibalism.” The translation does not remove the disturbing word or soften the coexistence of sovereignty and cannibalism.

This is a significant choice for a mass edition. The title has already offered the reader a reassuring lineage, but the narrative refuses to turn Queequeg into a merely noble or assimilable figure. His dignity is not achieved by erasing the cultural difference that the Western imagination has marked as savage. It is achieved through the coexistence of incompatible categories: king and cannibal, pagan and moral observer, outsider and bearer of knowledge.

The passage concerning Queequeg’s desire to visit Christendom extends this reversal. He wishes to learn from Christians how to make his people happier and, more importantly, better. Akkawi’s Arabic intensifies the vocabulary of enlightenment and education, using terms associated with reform and the instruction of the uneducated. This choice creates an institutional resonance: Queequeg’s aspiration can be heard within the language of cultural improvement. Yet the narrative’s direction remains unstable, because the one who seeks knowledge from Christendom becomes the one who judges its conduct.

After observing Christian practices, Queequeg concludes that Christians may be as unhappy and wicked as, or even more unhappy and wicked than, his father’s pagan subjects. He therefore decides, “I’ll die a pagan.” The translation preserves the force of this reversal. It does not convert the statement into a temporary misunderstanding or a lesson about the universal superiority of Christianity. In Jauss’s terms, the phrase maintains an aesthetic distance that unsettles the reader’s inherited expectations. The pagan is not simply awaiting instruction; he becomes the measure against which Christian conduct is exposed.

The final image of the harpoon replacing the sceptre condenses the episode’s social and material transformation. Queequeg’s royal inheritance does not disappear; it is translated into labor. The harpoon becomes the sceptre of a working seaman. Akkawi’s formulation preserves the physical object and its symbolic function, allowing the line to join social commentary with a strong rhythmic balance. The result is not a sentimental elevation of manual labor but a redefinition of sovereignty through embodied skill.

The episode thus establishes the article’s guiding pattern. The paratextual title domesticates Queequeg by making him legible as a “descendant of kings.” The narrative resists that domestication by preserving cannibalism, pagan commitment, and the critique of Christian conduct. Accessibility opens the door, but the text decides what the reader encounters once inside.

4.2 The Wheelbarrow and the Maritime Rescue: Shared Life and Racial Hierarchy

Chapter 13 moves from the relative isolation of the inn to the public space of the harbor and the deck of the small passenger vessel *Moss*. The movement intensifies social and racial contact. People stare not simply at Queequeg, whom they are accustomed to seeing as a cannibal, but at the sight of a white man and a cannibal walking together. The translation preserves the visual shock produced by this breach of racial boundaries.

The comic episode of the wheelbarrow makes the same point through physical action. Queequeg fastens his chest to the barrow and then carries the vehicle on his shoulders instead of pushing it. The scene is funny because it exposes the relativity of apparently self-evident tools and habits. It also establishes Queequeg's practical intelligence and bodily competence. He is not an abstract emblem of difference; he is a person whose relation to objects unsettles the assumptions of the people watching him.

The racial hierarchy becomes explicit when some onlookers assume that whiteness makes a person superior to Queequeg and imitate him mockingly behind his back. Akkawi's translation retains the bluntness of this encounter. It does not transform prejudice into a harmless cultural misunderstanding. The captain's threat—"I will kill-e you, you cannibal"—likewise remains direct and violent. The insult is allowed to sound as an insult.

This fidelity matters because the episode's ethic is not built on a pre-existing harmony. The "shared world" announced by the revised title is not initially shared on equal terms. The white passengers and the captain claim the authority to classify, ridicule, and threaten. Queequeg's place within their world is defined by exclusion. The narrative's later movement toward solidarity therefore cannot be understood as a simple confirmation of the title.

The rescue changes the balance through physical action. Queequeg strips to the waist, leaps from the side, swims with the concentrated force of an animal, disappears beneath the water, and re-emerges dragging a lifeless body. The translated sequence preserves the muscular rhythm of the original: short actions accumulate, the body becomes visible as a sequence of movements, and the rescue is experienced through tension rather than summarized as a moral example.

The culminating statement—"It's a mutual, joint-stock world, in all meridians. We cannibals must help these Christians"—contains the episode's deepest irony. The "shared world" is not a sentimental declaration of universal harmony. It is an indictment of the hierarchy that preceded it. The people who considered themselves superior are compelled to recognize that their lives depend upon the competence and generosity of the person they called a savage.

In Meschonnic's terms, meaning here is inseparable from the movement of the discourse. The word "shared" acquires its force through the violence and inequality that the narrative has already staged. The Arabic title offers reconciliation in advance; the narrative makes solidarity costly, embodied, and earned. It is Queequeg's action—not an abstract ideal—that turns a divided social space into a common one.

4.3 Nantucket: Mythic Geography and Political Economy

Chapter 14 establishes Nantucket as both a geographical location and a political-economic center of the global whaling industry. The island is introduced directly: "Nantucket! Take out your map and look at it." The translation maintains the narrator's apostrophe and preserves the island's distance from the mainland, its loneliness, and its comparison with the Eddystone lighthouse. The specific geography remains visible rather than being dissolved into a generic maritime setting.

The island is described as a mere hillock or elbow of sand, all beach and without a background. Akkawi chooses elevated classical Arabic vocabulary for the terrain, including a term for a sand dune or ridge. This is an instance of stylistic elevation: Melville's New England irony acquires a more ceremonious Arabic register. The choice is not neutral, but it does not erase the material landscape. The island remains small, exposed, and physically defined.

The comedy of scarcity is also preserved. Wooden objects in Nantucket are treated like fragments of the True Cross in Rome, while toadstools are planted outside houses so that people may sit in their shade during the heat. The comparison retains Melville's mock-epic exaggeration: an ordinary lack of timber is inflated into a relic economy and a bizarre horticultural practice.

The passage then expands from local description into geopolitical satire. America may add Mexico to Texas and pile Cuba upon Canada; England may overrun India. Yet two-thirds of the globe belong to the Nantucketer because the sea is his and he owns it as emperors own empires. The translation preserves this parallel between imperial expansion on land and maritime domination. Nantucket's whalers are not merely hardy local workers; they participate in a system of global possession.

This is where the edition's accessibility becomes intellectually productive. The elevated register may impose a certain dignity on Melville's voice, but the translated passage continues to communicate the political structure of the joke. The ocean is presented as a theater of sovereignty, and whaling as an economic practice inseparable from imperial imagination. The

Arabic reader is not offered a depoliticized landscape. The island's particular geography becomes a point of entry into a larger history of capitalism, empire, and mobility.

The episode therefore complicates any claim that accessible popular translation must necessarily flatten place. Nantucket remains a named and located island, with its own ecology, history, and social mythology. The principal transformation occurs in register rather than reference. A rough, quick, and ironic New England prose is recast in a more classically resonant Arabic style, but the geopolitical pressure of the original survives.

4.4 Chowder: Sensory Materiality and Grotesque Comedy

Chapter 15 offers the clearest concentration of sensory culture. Food, local memory, popular comedy, and the physical environment of the sea come together around chowder. The English title is replaced by "The Fish Dish," a general descriptive phrase that sacrifices some of the cultural specificity of "chowder" in order to facilitate immediate comprehension.

The edition compensates for that generalization with a translator's note explaining that chowder is a soup made from fish, potatoes, and onions, and that the English term has been retained as the title in some Arabic versions. This is a textbook instance of Eco's negotiated translation. The title lowers the threshold of entry; the note restores information that the title has omitted. The reader is not required to know the New England dish in advance, but neither is the term allowed to disappear entirely.

The comic exchange between clam and cod is translated as a rapid misunderstanding over the names of food. The Arabic version uses terms for clam and cod in a way that preserves the theatrical rhythm of the scene: a question, a correction, a repetition, and a shouted order to the kitchen. The humor depends less on a dictionary equivalent than on the pace of the exchange and the social awkwardness it produces.

The description of the chowder retains its physical abundance. The small, juicy clams, pounded ship biscuit, salted pork, butter, pepper, and salt remain present. Significantly, the translation does not remove the pork or diminish the richness of the dish in response to an assumed religious sensitivity. The sensory world of the inn is allowed to remain foreign, even when particular ingredients may be culturally or religiously uncomfortable.

The translation is particularly inventive in the phrase describing the hotel as the "fishiest of all fishy places." The Arabic formulation recreates the verbal recurrence through a compact morphological expression. The pots continue to bubble with chowder; Mrs Hussey wears a

polished necklace made of codfish vertebrae; Hosea Hussey keeps his account books bound in old sharkskin. Sound, repetition, and visual strangeness work together.

The grotesque reaches its comic peak in the image of the striped cow whose hooves appear to be shod with codfish heads. The translation preserves the surreal materiality of the scene. The cow is not converted into a decorative symbol; it remains a physical, absurd, and faintly repulsive presence in the coastal landscape.

The reference to Yojo, Queequeg's little black idol, also retains the force of pagan practice. A footnote explains that Yojo is a deity in pagan mythology, but the note does not remove the idol from the narrative's practical world. Queequeg consults Yojo in relation to travel and action. The explanatory apparatus makes the belief legible without neutralizing its agency.

This chapter confirms the article's central argument. The edition sometimes simplifies a threshold term, but it does not consistently purify the body of the text. The material details that an institutional family edition might have been expected to soften—pork, bodily appetite, bones, sharkskin, fish-smelling domestic life, and pagan ritual—remain active. The paratext offers guidance; the narrative preserves friction.

4.5 Juxtaposed Evidence: English Source, Jordanian Arabic, and Critical Analysis

The following tables place Melville's English beside the Arabic wording published in the Jordanian edition. Each example follows the article's guiding thread: the paratext often makes the encounter easier, while the translated narrative preserves forms of strangeness, contradiction, and material force that resist complete domestication.

4.5.1 Queequeg's Genealogy: Royal Blood and Cannibalism

Source text (Melville)	Jordanian Arabic rendering (Akkawi)	Critical analysis
"Queequeg was a native of Rokovoko, an island that is not down on any map; true places never are." (Ch. 12, p. 94)	كان هذا البدائي من أبناء جزيرة «روكوفوكو، وهي جزيرة تقع إلى الغرب والجنوب، وليس لها على المصورات الجغرافية وجود، فالأماكن الحقة لا تدرج على تلك المصورات أبداً» (ص 64)	The invented place-name and the paradox between maps and true places are preserved. The added direction gives concrete orientation, while the formal Arabic register offers explanatory elevation.
"...his father was a High Chief,	كان والده رئيساً كبير المقام، كان	The Arabic retains the collision

a King; his uncle a High Priest... his royal blood was yet slightly bleached with cannibalism..." (Ch. 12, p. 94)	ملكاً، وكان عمه رأس الكهنة... كان الدم الذي يجري في عروقه ممتازاً، إذ كان ملوكياً، وإن كنت أخشى أنه للأسف تنقص من النسبة الملوكية فيه بنزوعه في شبابه الجاهل إلى أكل لحوم البشر» (ص 64)	between royal lineage and cannibalism. The title dignifies Queequeg, but the narrative refuses to sanitize him.
"...he had desirous to visit Christendom... that he might learn among the Christians the art of making his people happier, and what was more to the point, better..." (Ch. 12, p. 95)	تغلغلت في روحه الطماحة رغبة» جياشة ليعرف عن دنيا المسيحية أكثر مما يستطيع أن يراه في أنموذج أو اثنين من صيادي الحيتان... لكي يكسب القدرة على تنوير بني وطنه الأميين وتثقيفهم...» (ص 64-65)	"تنوير" and "تثقيف" intensify the language of enlightenment and resonate with institutional reform discourse, yet the outsider later becomes the judge of Christian conduct.
"I'll die a pagan." (Ch. 12, p. 96)	سأظل وثنيّاً حتى يوافيني «الأجل» (ص 65)	The declaration is preserved with a firm, proverbial cadence. Aesthetic distance remains.

4.5.2 The Wheelbarrow and Maritime Rescue: From Racial Spectacle to Ethical Reversal

Source text (Melville)	Jordanian Arabic rendering (Akkawi)	Critical analysis
"...people looked at us... not so much at Queequeg as at us together; for they were used to seeing cannibals... but this thing of seeing a white man and a cannibal together..." (Ch. 13, p. 98)	وبينا كنا سائرين كان الناس يحملقون «فيينا، ولم تتجه أنظارهم كثيراً إلى رفيقي، إذ كانوا تعودوا أن يروا متوحشين مثله في شوارع بلدهم، وإنما كانوا يحدقون لرؤيتنا أنا وإياه في صحبة وثيقة» (ص 67)	The visual structure and the social transgression are preserved; "صحبة وثيقة" makes the breach of racial boundaries explicit.
"...strapping his chest on the wheelbarrow, Queequeg stepped behind the handles... and walked off with it on his shoulders." (Ch. 13, p. 99)	وضع صندوقه عليها وربطه ربطاً محكماً، ثم حمل العربة على منكبيه. ومضى يشق الرصيف» (ص 67-68)	The comic inversion of technology survives: the vehicle becomes an object carried by the person.

"...because he was white he was somehow superior to Queequeg... mimicking him behind his back..." (Ch. 13, p. 101)	وهم مجموعة من الحمقى تعجبوا « من أن يكون اثنان من الناس على مثل هذه الصحية، كان الرجل الأبيض شيء أرفع من الزنجي الذي فقد البياض... وفاجأ كويكوج أحد هؤلاء الفتیان الأغرار وهو يحاكيه ساخرًا من وراء ظهره» (ص 69)	The translation keeps the racial hierarchy and humiliating imitation visible; prejudice is not softened.
"I will kill-e you, you cannibal, if you try any more tricks aboard here..." (Ch. 13, p. 102)	أنا أقتلك يا آكل لحوم البشر إذا أنت قمت بإحدى حيلك ها هنا على هذه السفينة. فاحذر ثم احذر» (ص 69)	The insult and threat remain direct, and the repetition gives the speech a coercive rhythm.
"It's a mutual, joint-stock world, in all meridians. We cannibals must help these Christians." (Ch. 13, p. 104)	هذا عالم مشترك يتبادل الناس التعاون في كل بقعة من بقاعه؛ ونحن المتوحشين أكلة لحوم البشر لا بد من أن نساعد هؤلاء المسيحيين» (ص 71).	The central irony remains: the cannibals must help the Christians. The title is an ethical possibility, not a pre-existing fact.

4.5.3 Nantucket: Geography, Register, and Imperial Possession

Source text (Melville)	Jordanian Arabic rendering (Akkawi)	Critical analysis
"Nantucket! Take out your map and look at it. See what a real corner of the world it occupies; how it stands there... more lonely than the Eddystone lighthouse." (Ch. 14, p. 105)	نانتوكت! خذ خريطتك وانظر إليها. تأمل أي بقعة تحتلها في هذه الأرض وكيف تقع، حيث تقع، بعيدة عن الشاطئ، متوحدة أكثر من فنار أديستون» (ص 72)	The apostrophe and imperative are preserved; the reader is invited to look, and Nantucket remains a specific place.
"Look at it—a mere hillock, and elbow of sand; all beach, without a background." (Ch. 14, p. 105)	انظر إليها.. ما هي إلا كتيف رمل أو حقف، كلها شاطئ ليس وراءه أرض.» (ص 72)	"حقف" gives the terrain classical dignity, but the material image remains.
"...pieces of wood in Nantucket are carried about like bits of the true cross in Rome..." (Ch. 14, p.	وأن قطع الخشب في نانتوكت تحمل وتنقل كأنها شطايا من الصليب الحقيقي بروما...» (ص	The mock-sacred comparison survives; scarcity turns wood into

105)	72).	relics.
"Two thirds of this terraqueous globe are the Nantucketer's. For the sea is his; he owns it, as Emperors own empires..." (Ch. 14, p. 106)	غير أن ثلثي هذه المعمورة « المؤلف من بر وبحر من نصيب ابن نانتوكت، لأن البحر منها هو نصيبه، فهو يملكه مثلما يحرز الأباطرة أمباطورياتهم...» (ص 73).	The political analogy between the whaler and the emperor survives. This remains a critique of possession, not only a celebration of maritime skill.

4.5.4 Chowder: Lexical Accommodation and Sensory Excess

Source text (Melville)	Jordanian Arabic rendering (Akkawi)	Critical analysis
Chapter title: "Chowder" (Ch. 15, p. 107)	«طبق السمك» (ص 74).	A specific cultural term becomes a general description: entry is easier, but cultural precision is postponed.
Translator's note on chowder	«الشودر: حساء من سمك وبطاطا وبصل. وقد استعمل هذا اللفظ الإنكليزي عنواناً للفصل في بعض نسخ الرواية المعربة» (هامش، ص 74).	The note restores the transliterated term and explains the ingredients, compensating for the title's generalization.
"Clam or Cod?... A clam for supper? a cold clam!... Clam for two!" (Ch. 15, p. 108)	«قد أو حلزون؟... حلزون للعشاء! وبارد أيضاً!... حلزون لاثنين» (ص 75).	Rapid questions and repetitions recreate the theatrical timing of the misunderstanding.
"It was made of small juicy clams... pounded ship biscuit, and salted pork... enriched with butter..." (Ch. 15, p. 108)	«كان ذلك الطبق مصنوعاً من حلزون صغير غص... وقد مزج ببسكويت السفن مسحوقاً، وشرائح من لحم الخنزير رقيقة مملحة، وقد غذي كل ذلك بالزبدة...» (ص 75-76).	The sensuous inventory remains, including salted pork; no assumed religious censorship removes it.
"The fishiest of all fishy places... the pots had been	«كان الفندق أشد المحلات التي تقدم السمك إمعاناً في "السمكية"...	"إمعاناً في السمكية" recreates recurrence, while "تقرقر" adds

perpetually boiling with chowder..." (Ch. 15, p. 109)	إذ كانت القدور دائماً تفرقر بالشودر...» (ص 76)	audible texture.
"Mrs Hussey wore a polished necklace of codfish vertebrae..." (Ch. 15, p. 109)	ثم إن زوجة هسي تلبس عقداً « مصقولاً من فقرات سمك القد...» (ص 76).	The grotesque object remains fully visible; maritime material enters domestic ornament.
A striped cow appears to be shod with codfish heads. (Ch. 15, p. 109)	ورأيت بقرة هوسيا المخططة... وقد علق في كل حافر من حوافرها رأس سمكة القد، وأنا أؤكد لكم أنها كانت تبدو محذوة منتعلة» (ص 76).	The surreal image survives with a strong closing cadence in "محذوة منتعلة."

The title "Descendant of Kings" offers an accessible frame of hereditary dignity, while the Arabic narrative retains an unassimilated Queequeg. "The Shared World" gains force only after racial exclusion has been made audible. Nantucket remains geographically and politically specific, even where the Arabic register becomes more elevated. In the chowder episode, the title simplifies, the note explains, and the body restores sensory density. Across all four cases, accessibility is achieved not by removing difficulty but by managing it across textual levels.

These tables also clarify the article's methodological claim. A translation's politics cannot be inferred from its chapter titles alone, just as its fidelity cannot be judged by isolated lexical equivalents. Meaning emerges from the relation among title, note, sentence, rhythm, image, and readerly expectation. The Jordanian edition therefore negotiates with the reader at the threshold while allowing Melville's narrative to continue its work of disturbance inside the frame.

5. Findings: Accessible Translation and the Expansion of the Arabic Reader's Horizon

The four episodes make it possible to move beyond absolute judgments about institutional cultural editions. The Jordanian edition is neither a transparent window nor a ruined copy. It is a structured act of mediation in which different parts of the book perform different functions. The paratext frames, reassures, and proposes interpretive routes. The narrative repeatedly tests the adequacy of those routes.

The first axis is Queequeg's genealogy. "Descendant of Kings" raises the character's status and places him within a familiar vocabulary of noble ancestry. Yet the narrative retains cannibalism, pagan commitment, and the critique of Christian practice. The title makes Queequeg easier to

approach, while the text prevents the reader from reducing him to a safely familiar figure. The result is an expansion, rather than a simple confirmation, of the reader's horizon.

The second axis is the wheelbarrow and the rescue. "The Shared World" presents an ethical abstraction before the reader encounters the episode's racial insults and threats. The body of the narrative then reveals that coexistence is not a ready-made ideal. It must be achieved through material competence, courage, and the recognition of dependence. The translated text therefore preserves the satirical pressure of Melville's reversal: the people who claim civilization need help from the person they classify as a cannibal.

The third axis is Nantucket. "Descendants of Nantucket" preserves the place-name and its local identity. Within the prose, elevated vocabulary changes the register but not the island's geographical specificity or the political economy of whaling. The ocean remains an arena of possession, and the whaler remains connected to imperial systems. Accessibility here is not achieved by erasing geography; it is achieved by giving the reader a linguistically legible route into it.

The fourth axis is chowder. "The Fish Dish" generalizes a culture-specific title, but the footnote restores the unfamiliar term and explains its ingredients. The narrative then compensates for the title's simplification through sensory density: clams, ship biscuit, salted pork, butter, bones, sharkskin, bubbling pots, and the comic cow with codfish heads for shoes. The reduced specificity of the threshold is balanced by the abundance of the body text.

5.1 Toward a Definition of Accessible Translation

The evidence suggests that accessible translation should not be defined as the removal of difficulty. It is better understood as the management of difficulty across different textual levels. In this edition, accessibility operates through a two-level negotiation.

- The directive level: The paratext absorbs the reader's first encounter with strangeness. Chapter titles invoke lineage, shared life, or an immediately recognizable dish. The introduction provides a stable symbolic frame. The institutional project places the book within a public and familial mission. Together, these devices construct a welcoming route into a difficult classic.
- The generative level: Once the reader enters the narrative, the text continues to generate uncertainty and resistance. Cannibalism is not erased; pagan practice remains active; Christian conduct is criticized; racial hostility is spoken plainly; food retains its forbidden and grotesque materiality; and the rhythm of action continues to carry meaning beyond paraphrase.

Accessible translation, in this sense, is neither ideological deletion nor naïve localization. It is a layered negotiation between the need to initiate reading and the ethical obligation to preserve the text's capacity to unsettle. Its success depends on whether the assistance offered at the threshold eventually leads to a diminished work or to a wider encounter with difference.

5.2 Reception Horizon and Interpretive Negotiation

The interaction between Jauss and Eco clarifies the kind of reader produced by the edition. The translation does not eliminate aesthetic distance altogether. The Arabic reader is still confronted with a horizon that differs from inherited expectations, especially when the conventional colonial binaries of civilization and savagery are reversed. When Queequeg rescues the white boy who mocked him, the Christian world becomes dependent on the skill of the pagan outsider. The translation consequently retains a capacity to revise the reader's assumptions about civilization, religion, and humanity.

At the same time, the edition does not leave interpretation entirely unframed. Its titles propose ethical summaries before the narrative unfolds. This is not necessarily a defect. It is a form of negotiation with the imagined family reader. The problem would arise only if the proposed summary exhausted the episode. The comparative evidence suggests that it does not. The narrative repeatedly exceeds the titles, and that excess is where the translation's critical value lies.

The treatment of culturally material terms illustrates Eco's notion of calculated concession. The title "The Fish Dish" gives up some of the strangeness of "Chowder," but the footnote and the narrative restore the term and its sensory world. The translation thus creates a new semantic encyclopedia for the reader: not by assuming prior familiarity, and not by erasing the unfamiliar, but by arranging explanation and encounter so that the reader can gradually acquire the missing context.

6. Conclusion

This comparative reading of the 2009 Moby-Dick edition prepared and introduced by Dr Rihab Akkawi within the Jordanian Family Library project has revealed a complex interaction between institutional care and literary translation. The edition cannot be adequately described either as a mutilation of the source text or as a neutral transfer between languages.

First, the analysis challenges the thesis of comprehensive corruption. The edition preserves Nantucket's geography, the unsettling logic of pagan and Christian comparison, the critique of

racial hierarchy, and the grotesque materiality of food and place. It does not systematically remove the passages most likely to trouble a generalized family readership.

Second, the analysis challenges the thesis of complete linguistic neutrality. The introduction, institutional framing, and revised chapter titles clearly guide reception. They calm uncertainty, propose ethical interpretations, and align the book with the moderate enlightening discourse of the sponsoring institution. The edition therefore shapes meaning before and around the translated narrative, even when the narrative itself resists the shape imposed upon it.

The broader conclusion is that the democratization of world literature does not necessarily require the destruction of artistic complexity. Making a classic available to a mass readership at a symbolic price need not mean making it harmless. Arabic readers can encounter aesthetic distance and human difference when translation combines explanatory generosity with rhetorical and rhythmic responsibility.

The Jordanian edition is therefore best understood as a distinctive example of accessible translation: a form that negotiates between the institutional desire to reassure and the literary text's capacity to disturb. Its paratext builds a bridge, but the bridge does not determine the landscape on the other side. Melville's material world—its bodies, foods, prejudices, rituals, jokes, and political contradictions—continues to press against the frame. That continuing pressure is the edition's most important achievement, and it opens the way for broader comparative studies of other chapters of *Moby-Dick* and of similar public-facing translation projects across the Arab world.

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