

Evaluation Report

Noor Ash Shams: Palestinian-Irish Children's Literature Translation (2014-2020)

(A Cross-cultural Research and Publishing Project of Birzeit University/Dublin City University)

<https://ctts.ie/links/#noor-ash-shams>

8 June 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

It gives me great pleasure to write in connection with the Palestinian-Irish Children's Literature Translation Project, jointly led by scholars from Birzeit University and Dublin City University.

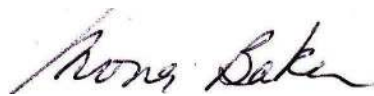
It is difficult to overestimate the educational, social and political significance of this project, which is simultaneously a cultural initiative and an act of much needed solidarity between two communities that have lived – and in the case of Palestine still live – under extremely trying conditions. The decision to translate between Arabic and Irish in this context carries much significance, irrespective of the (literary) genre selected. But to undertake the enormous effort to provide two-way translations of children's literature between these two languages is a particularly felicitous and meaningful choice. All literature stimulates the imagination and promotes empathy, but children's literature plays an exceptionally formative role in this respect.

Academic interest in the translation of children's literature has accelerated significantly in the past couple of decades, and the publishing of children's literature in general is booming worldwide. Children's literature is now widely recognized as an important field of academic journals, with several top quality international journals fully dedicated to the subject. *Children's Literature*, published by John Hopkins University Press, is only one example. Among the many reference works dedicated to children's literature, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* alone runs into four volumes. Translated children's literature, too, has attracted considerable scholarly attention, with numerous book-length studies appearing in the past decade. The scope for high level scholarly publications arising out of the Noor Ash Shams project is therefore considerable.

From a more practical perspective, translating children's literature is challenging on many levels, including the much discussed difficulty of their dual readership (children and adults/parents). In the case of Arabic, there is the added difficulty of finding the right register to address children in a variety of Arabic they can understand and enjoy at the same time as fulfilling their educational needs. While I am unable to comment on the Irish texts, I can certainly assure prospective readers that the Arabic translations are excellent. The language flows naturally, and the translator has very skilfully complemented the educationally-informed choice of adopting Standard Arabic with a great sense of sensitivity to children's limited ability not only to understand but also to enjoy a variety of language that does not quite match the one they speak at home and hear on the street. The Standard

Arabic used is impeccable but at the same time accessible, rendering the stories both highly enjoyable and highly instructive. The books are beautifully produced in both languages, bringing the stories alive not only through the verbal medium but also through the wonderful images that accompany the translation.

The project has attracted considerable media coverage and has rightly received significant interest on social media platforms such as Twitter. This is not surprising given the originality and cultural import of such an undertaking. To the best of my knowledge, the project is the first of its kind, the first to initiate a two-way translation flow between Ireland and Palestine in any field, let alone the field of children's literature. It is an outstanding cultural and scholarly achievement for which Birzeit and the translation team deserve the highest of praise.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mona Baker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mona Baker
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