Elvira Cávara Aguilera

Traducciones, adaptaciones y doble destinatario en literatura infantil y juvenil
There is no more beautiful sight than that of a child reading

Günter Grass
Premio Nobel de Literatura
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Zohar Shavit

Invited Strangers in Domestic Garb
Cultural Translation in Hebrew Children’s Literature: Strategies and Legitimizations

Abstract: This contribution examines how “domestication” - the process of transforming foreign elements of a translated text into familiar ones - has historically served to ease the tension between the strange and the known, by making what is foreign familiar and recognized domestic terms. Based on several late nineteenth and early twentieth-century translations into Hebrew of classic works of children’s literature, including texts such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Max und Moritz* and *Das doppelt Löbchen*, I maintain that at an early stage of its development, when the newly-emerging Hebrew culture used translated literature to build up a body of Hebrew children’s literature, translators felt a need to sustain and to fortify the new culture’s own identity. In order to do so they endeavored to make translated literature look and feel like an integral part of the Hebrew-language native bookshelf. Their approach to domestication involved converting nearly everything possible that belonged to the world of the source system into the world of the target system: first names, colloquial expressions, customs, religious holidays, and calendars. Only later, when Hebrew literature was more confident in its existence as a robust and autonomous entity did it open its gates to invited “strangers” and incorporate them in their own form – no longer cloaked in domestic garb but as legitimate strangers.

Keywords: Translation, domestication, nation building, Hebrew culture, source system, target system

Some words

In one of his poems, the medieval Hebrew poet Moshe ibn Ezra, a native of Granada, lamented his exile from the city, from which he had been expelled by the Almoravids. Describing his departure from Granada, he portrayed himself as a bird drifting away from its nest. I am grateful to be able to visit this nest, a nest which has been so valuable in the course of Jewish history.

1 Introduction

The slogan of El-Al, the Israeli airline, reads:

“Go abroad and feel at home”.

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1 Prof. Zohar Shavit, Incumbent, The Porter Chair of Semiotics and Culture Research Chair, the Program in Research of Child and Youth Culture, School of Cultural Studies, Tel Aviv University
It has always sounded a bit weird to me. Why should we feel at home when we travel to foreign countries to explore the world outside our own?

One day, during my stay in Paris, my partner and I were sitting at a table in a small coffeehouse. A group of Israeli tourists passing by, who heard us conversing in Hebrew, stopped and asked us for directions to get to the fast-food falafel place. Quite baffled I asked them, why go for falafel and not try the different foods Paris can offer? And one tourist answered: because I long to feel at home in Paris.

This tension between being or feeling at home and being a citizen of the world is at the heart of this article. I will examine, with the help of some examples drawn from translated Hebrew children’s literature, how “domestication” - the process of transforming foreign elements of a translated text into familiar ones - serves to ease the tension between attempting to invite the stranger home and attempting to make what is foreign known and recognized on its own terms.

I maintain that at an early stage of its development, when the newly-emerging Hebrew culture used translated literature to build up the field of Hebrew-language books for children, translators felt a need to sustain and to fortify the new culture’s own identity. In order to do this they endeavored to make translated literature look and feel like an integral part of the Hebrew-language body of literature. Domestication was thus required in order to minimize the sense that the strange and the unfamiliar. Only later, when Hebrew literature was more confident in its existence as a self-standing autonomous entity, could it open its gates to invited “strangers” and incorporate them, not cloaked in domestic garb but as legitimate strangers.

My contribution examines several late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century translations into Hebrew of classical works of children’s literature, including texts such as Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Tom Sawyer, Max and Moritz and Das doppelte Lottchen.

2 Cultural equivalents

Let’s go to the forest
And quickly run and climb a tree
I will climb on the tree
And look for orphaned chicks
To bring them home and teach them things

This poem appeared in the first Hebrew translation in 1924 of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. It was published by Oramut, a publishing house whose agenda was to translate into Hebrew the best world literature and make it available for children who grew on Hebrew, at least partially. Established in 1917 in Moscow, the publishing house moved via Frankfurt am Main to Tel Aviv in 1924; by the time it closed in 1942, it had published about 500 books, many of which were translations of classical children’s literature in a series called Alumim [youth].

The poem above (“Let’s Go to the Forest”) was meant to serve as an equivalent to Lewis Carroll’s parody of Isaac Watts’s popular and tedious poem How Doth the Little Busy Bee, which saw Carroll mocking the later overtly didactic message.

Lewis Carroll

“How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale!”

“How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neathly spreads his claws,
And welcomes little fishes in,
With gently smiling jaws!”

Isaac Watts

“How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every opening flower!

How skilfully she builds her cell!
How neath she spreads the wax!
And labours hard to store it well
With the sweet food she makes.”

Fig. 1: Lewis Carroll’s parody of Isaac Watts’s poem

Lewis Carroll had at his disposal a rich repository of poems for children, upon which children in the English-speaking world had been raised and which they knew by heart. Carroll could assume that his readers would identify the original text and enjoy the parody. Unlike Carroll, the translator into Hebrew, L. Siman (a pseudonym for Arye Leib Semitizki) had at his disposal a much poorer arsenal. In 1924, the body of Hebrew children’s literature in Ereitz-Israel was young and fragile, and it addressed children for whom Hebrew, in most cases, was not their native mother tongue. Moreover, modern Hebrew as both a spoken and a written language was undergoing a dramatic process of revival process. Translations were an integral part of that revival process, and were also used to impart the language both to children born in Ereitz-Israel and to those who were newly-arrived. Hence, translated literature had a major function not only in expanding the body of Hebrew children’s literature, but also in teaching the very language itself. An indication of this function can be found at the very end of Siman’s translation of Alice, where a page dedicated to “difficult words” explains those words in simpler language and/or translates them into four additional languages: English, French, Russian and German (but notably not into Yiddish, which was spoken by the majority of the newcomers to Ereitz-Israel (Shavit, 2017), but was seen as the inferior language of the Diaspora). However, the subject of active languages at the background of the intended reader of translated literature, as well as the role of translated literature in imparting the Hebrew language, call for a separate discussion. Here I will focus on the endeavor to make translated texts more accessible to
the children in Erez-Israel through domestication. Such domestication involved converting nearly everything possible into the world of the target system: first names, colloquial expressions, customs, religious holidays, calendars—anything that could be described as what the Swedish scholar Gote Klingburg called the "flora and fauna" of the text (Klingburg, 1986: 40–41).

The norm of changing protagonists’ names long dominated translations into Hebrew of both adult and children’s literature. Thus, for instance, the 19th century translations of Shakespeare re-named Othello Itael ha-kashfi [Itael the black] and Romeo and Juliet Ram and Yael, trying to stay close to the sound of the original names. However, long after this norm had ceased to dominate translations of adult literature, it still dominated translations of children’s literature. An earlier translation of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1924) made Alice ⇒ Alisa, Mabel ⇒ Sara, and Mary Ann, a generic name for a maid, into ⇒ Hana-Dvora. The first translation of Tom Sawyer into Hebrew, published in 1911, turned Tom into Tam, Becky into Bikli and Mary into Miri, again in an attempt to adhere to the original sound of the first names.

The names of the naughty girls of Hulda von Levetzow’s Lies und Lena—a feminist response to Max und Moritz—became in the Hebrew translation “Ruth” and “Rina”. Nitza Ben Ari (1992: 227) has shown how the butterfly Gottfried in Die Konferenz der Tiere became Avshalom (Jerusalem, 1958), and the twin girls in Erich Kästner’s Das doppelte Lottchen became Ora and Li, drawn from the two halves of the common Hebrew name Liora (Tel Aviv, 1962).

In the first Hebrew translation of Max und Moritz, the translator, Aaron Lubotishkis, gave the two troublemakers biblical names: “Shimon” and “Levy,” thus enhancing the protagonists’ characterization as evil. In order to ensure that the reader would not miss the reference to the Bible, he added as an epigraph one verse of Jacob’s blessing to his sons:

Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations (Genesis 49: 5. American King James Version).

In a later translation, published in 1939, the translator re-named Onkel Fritz Uncle Mordechai, alluding perhaps to the culturally well-known uncle Mordechai in the book of Esther. In a translation of one of A. A. Milne’s classics, When We Were Very Young, Christopher Robin became Uri—the ultimate name for a boy, since it appeared in the famous verses by two of Hebrew’s best-known poets for children, Lea Goldberg and Rachel Tzvia (2004: 152).

The reason for giving the protagonists Hebrew names also had to do with the attempt to evoke the cultural background behind those names, for instance by evoking biblical allusions.

In the words of Gideon Toury (1980: 150):

"[the translator] was looking for names which will be Hebrew not in form only, but will also be suggestive for the Hebrew reader, that is, evoke in him certain associations on the basis of his cultural background, meaning first and foremost, as a minimal common denominator, a fairly good knowledge of the Bible (or, at least, of the Pentateuch)."

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**Hebraization of Names**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Name</th>
<th>Hebrew Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Alisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary-Anne</td>
<td>Hana-Dvora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mable</td>
<td>Sara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lies und Lena</td>
<td>Ruth and Rina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Tam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becky</td>
<td>Biki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Miri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max und Moritz</td>
<td>Ged and Dan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max und Moritz</td>
<td>Shimon and Levi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lehrer Lämpel</td>
<td>Mr. Torniel, the Rebbani of the village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lehrer Lämpel</td>
<td>Teacher Yochanan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witwe Bolte</td>
<td>Mrs. Masha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witwe Bolte</td>
<td>Aunt Sina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauer Mecke</td>
<td>Farmer Yehuda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauer Mecke</td>
<td>Farmer Yonathan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle Fritz</td>
<td>Uncles Mordechai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle Fritz</td>
<td>Uncle Yosef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butterfly Gottfried</td>
<td>Avshalom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luise, Lotte</td>
<td>Li, Ora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Robin</td>
<td>Uri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 2: Hebraization of names
addition to changing the first names of protagonists, the domestication of
ments involved adapting the original text to Jewish customs. For
instance, translators faced the issue of kashrut — Jewish dietary laws. Max and Moritz’s
trick involves hanging the widow Bolte’s hens. The poor hens pass away.
the widow Bolte removes the dead chickens — “die Verstorbenen”, and proceeds
without hesitation to roast them for dinner. Eventually it is Max and Moritz who
enjoy the feast.
Translation into Hebrew was subject to norms that respected kashrut and did
tolerate mentioning any non-kosher foods. Hence this episode posed a serious
bllem for Jewish translators — according to Jewish dietary law, Jews are not
wroto eat carcasses — and these hens were dead before they were taken to the
cher (the shochet). Hebrew translations tended to omit this anecdote, but the
translator into Yiddish found a creative solution. He would not have a good Jewish
local prepare a meal from such an abomination, especially in light of the fact that
meal would later be eaten by the mischief-makers — naive Jewish children.
Chone Shmeruk, the great Yiddish scholar, has shown, the translation provides
suitable solution to this problem. Coming upon the hanged chickens, the two
quickly grab their knives and:

[juts the string, saves their life.
The birds gasp and shudder,
try to sit, but barely flutter. […]
But enough tears shed, I must decide
what else to do before they’ve died.
The only solution left, I feel,
is to make them into a Sabbath meal.
Off to the shochet’s stall! she cries.
She grabs them up and off she flies.
Soon hens and roosters are no more.
She quickly returns through her kitchendoor,
plucking, salt and soaking them as she ought,
and drains them well as she was taught (Shmeruk, 1990: 191).

The need to conform to Jewish customs was behind the decision to add an
paragraph to the translation of Max and Moritz.
Translated texts were expected, as a rule, to depict food scenes in keeping with
Jewish dietary laws. In 1911 one of the most influential critics of the period, David
imman, complained in a footnote to his lengthy review of Luboshitsky’s Hebrew
version of Max and Moritz that the translator had allowed the baker to prepare
the flour on the eve of Passover — a holiday during which Jews are
allowed to eat any wheat at all (1911: 14).
Yiddish literature lies beyond the scope of my study, but it is worth men-
ing that according to Chone Shmeruk the same translational process charac-
tered translations of children’s literature into Yiddish, as it did translations into
Hebrew. Thus, for example, a goose may, in a Yiddish translation, be brought to a
Jewish circumcision ceremony replacing a Christian baptism ceremony (Shmeruk,
1990: 189).

The most problematic elements, of course, were pork products and pigs. Any
reference to food products relating to pork was doomed to be left out, even the
very mention of the word “pig” itself. This is what happens, for instance, in the
following scene: Alice, in Wonderland, is the midst of a conversation with the
Duchess regarding the Cheshire Cat. All of a sudden the Duchess becomes upset
and shouts: “Pig!” Alice is much relieved to find out that the Duchess is not referring
to her, but rather to a baby, which will indeed eventually transform into a
pig. The conversation then returns to its previous theme. This whole passage
is built around Carroll’s play with nonsense and idioms, such as the enigmatic
idiom: “to grin like a Cheshire cat”. In response to Alice’s question on the subject,
the Duchess explains:

“Please would you tell me,” said Alice, a little timidly, for she was not quite sure
whether it was good manners for her to speak first. “Why your cat grins like that?”
“It’s a Cheshire Cat,” said the Duchess, “and that’s why, Pig!”
She said the last word with such sudden violence that Alice quite jumped; but she
saw in another moment that it was addressed to the baby, and not to her, so she took
courage, and went on again. “I didn’t know that Cheshire Cats always grinned; in
fact, I didn’t know that cats could grin” (Carroll’s Alice).

The translator had to find a solution to this mention of the word “pig”, as well as to
find compensation for the enigmatic idiom about the Cheshire cat. He omitted
the “pig” altogether from the translation, without offering any compensation
for this omission. As to the play with nonsense — he replaced the enigmatic English
idiom with a no less enigmatic expression in Hebrew. In the Hebrew translation
the Duchess explains that the cat grins because it has just thought of Hanukkah
pancakes — a typical dish of the Jewish winter Festival of Lights Holiday.

Can you tell me, if you please, said Alice in a very soft voice, because she did not know
whether it was polite to speak first. Why does the cat grin? — Because he’s just recalled
the pancakes he ate for Hanukkah, answered the princess. — And I did not know that
cats grinned, [Alice] said when she could breathe again, and indeed I would not know
if cats can grin (Simon’s Hebrew translation).

The title of the tenth chapter of Alice — “The Lobster Quadrille” — posed a problem
because lobsters are not kosher. The translator did not offer any substitution for
the title and simply titled the chapter by its number. He also omitted a sentence
recounting how Alice had once tasted a lobster. On the other hand, he greatly
expanded a paragraph discussing all kinds of non-kosher fish.

“Do you know why it’s called a whiting?” “I never thought about it,” said Alice.
“Why?” “It does the boots and shoes,” the Gryphon replied very solemnly (Carroll’s
Alice).
“Do you know why it’s called avruma?” “Such a thought never crossed my mind,” Alice answered. “Why?” “Because the sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are allowed to eat it.” And shubata – isn’t it allowed as well? Allowed indeed, that’s why it is called shubata, as that is what we eat on Shabbat” (Siman’s Hebrew translation).

What we have here is an entire discussion based on complete judaization of nonsensical wordplay.

Translators tended to omit from the translated text entire references to Christian components or to replace them with Jewish components. Thus for example, in the 1924 translation of Alice, Christmas Eve becomes Rosh Hashanah – the Jewish New Year. Hans Christian Andersen’s story “The Little Match Girl” takes place on December 31st. The translator (David Frishman) replaced the (Christian) New Year’s Eve with Hanukkah – a Jewish winter Festival of Lights holiday. Consequently – and in fact in line with its own inner logic – the Christmas tree becomes a Hanukkiah – the nine-branched menorah that symbolizes the Jewish holiday. We again find this judaization of Christian elements in the 1949 translation of Erich Kästner’s Das doppelte Lottchen, where the protagonists’ faces are described as “lighting like a Hanukkiah (Ben-Ari, 1982: 227).” In the translation of When We Were Very Young, Uri (Christopher Robin) prays “Shema Yisrael” – a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services. Nonetheless, the choreography of a Christian prayer remains – the Jewish boy still kneels next to his bed, unlike in Jewish practice; Nonetheless, God is called Adonai and the evening prayer is called “iffiat arviti” – a Jewish prayer service held in the evening or night (Leket-Mor, 2004: 152).

In the fourth chapter of Max and Moritz the mischievous boys play a cruel trick in their teacher. While he is away at church practicing the organ, they fill his oboe pipe with gunpowder. It explodes when the teacher, back from church, clips it down to smoke. Most translations preferred to omit this chapter, which so undermines the sacred authority of a teacher, entirely or in part. Nevertheless, even translations that did retain this chapter still avoided mention of the church organ. The translator (Chava Carruth) replaced the organ, whose religious connotations were apparently too heavy to bear, with a piano. For some reason, perhaps technical difficulties, the original illustration with the organ remained. Thus, according to the illustration the teacher plays an organ, but according to the written text, he plays the piano. Even in a much later translation done in 1971 by Uri Sela, the translator felt the need to omit the organ from his translation.

Most translations into Hebrew of Max und Moritz retained the original illustrations, and so, according to Shmeruk (1990: 190), did most of the translations to Yiddish. However, one of the translations adjusted the illustrations to a Jewish setting, with the result that several details as well as the ambiance were modified.

Let us look at Anda Pinkerfeld’s 1939 translation into Hebrew, which included misticated illustrations taken from Joseph Tunkel’s Yiddish adaptation of Max und Moritz and described in detail by Chone Shmeruk (1990: 192–193). The tailor

in Max und Moritz is given a beard and a Jewish hat. This new pictorial representation is used throughout the entire chapter. In Chapter 5 of Max und Moritz, we encounter Uncle Fritz, whose picture is altered to fit the new character he is given – instead of the tufted Zippelmiutze Fritz sports in the original, the uncle now wears a yarmulke and he is bearded. The owner of the granary in the Hebrew version looks different from Bauer Mecke of the original German text; the illustrator clearly endeavored to make him look more Jewish. Likewise, the miller is depicted as a Jewish figure. Thus, the translator decided to domesticate the illustrations in line with the new version of the story, which serve to complete the process of making the alien known and familiar.

Schneider Bock

The “Jewish” Tailor

Fig. 3: Schneider Bock/the “Jewish” tailor as illustrated by Wilhelm Busch (1865)
Onkel Fritz

Uncle Mordechai

Bauer Mecke

Farmer Yehuda

Fig. 4: Onkel Fritz/Uncle Mordechai as illustrated by Wilhelm Buch (1865)

Fig. 5: Bauer Mecke/Farmer Yehuda as illustrated by Wilhelm Buch (1865)
This creation of Jewish surroundings or a "Jewish fauna and flora" was achieved not only by systematic omission of "non-Jewish" components, but also, as we have seen, through additions of distinctly Jewish elements. In some cases, episodes from Jewish history were added to the translated text, as well as references to Jewish holidays and to the Jewish calendar (which is different from the Gregorian calendar in that it is based on a luni-solar calendar and is used today mainly for determining the Jewish holidays).

The following example illustrates the matter:

The conversation that takes place between Alice, the March Hare, and the Dormouse is one of the most cited passages of Alice. As we all know, they discuss the riddle: "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?" Carroll plays here with the idiom "mad as a March hare," after which he names his character.

"Why, you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see'!" "You might just as well say," added the March Hare, "that 'I like what I get' is the same thing as 'I get what I like'!" "You might just as well say," added the Dormouse, which seemed to be talking in its sleep, 'that 'I breathe when I sleep' is the same thing as 'I sleep when I breathe'!' (Carroll's Alice).

Now, the translator could not find an equivalent either to "March Hare" or to the idiomatic phrase "mad as a March hare," which according to Gardner, who prepared the annotated edition of Alice, characterizes the bouncy behavior of European hares during the spring breeding season. The month of "March" was replaced in the Hebrew translation by two Jewish holidays - "Purim" and "Pesach" - that usually occur around March; he also named the hare "Ben Nissan," after the name of a spring month in the Jewish calendar:

"Do you mean that you will find the answer?" asked the hare, Ben Nissan [...] Is it the same thing, they all asked as one: to say that we are all nuts from Purim until Pesach as to say: we are all nuts from Pesach until Purim?" (Siman's Hebrew translation).

The translator also replaced well-known episodes in English history with episodes taken from Jewish history. The following example is taken from another oft-cited passage in Alice.

Alice and her new friends come out of the Pool of Tears wet and shivering. The mouse takes upon himself the duty of a responsible adult and assures them that he will dry them up: "I'll soon make you dry enough," and indeed he does. He manages to do so by recounting some boring anecdotes of English history taken from Haviland Chepman's Short Course of History, 1862, 143-44 (Carroll, 1977: 190).

---

"Ahem!" said the Mouse with an important air. "Are you all ready? This is the dirtiest thing I know. Silence all round, if you please!" William the Conqueror, whose cause was favoured by the pope, was soon submitted to by the English, who wanted leaders, and had been of late much accustomed to usurpation and conquest. Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria" [...] (Carroll’s Alice).

The translator replaced the mouse’s lecture on William the Conqueror with a detailed and tiresome account of the Herodian dynasty, taken from Jewish historiography. A short excerpt will suffice to illustrate the matter:

“As you know Herod relied on the Romans and persecuted Antigonus’ allies and the Hasmonaean, old Hyrcanus and his daughter Alexandra and her two children, Miriam and Aristobulus” (Simon’s Hebrew translation).

And so on and so forth.

In a later episode, Alice complains that she seems to have forgotten everything she knows and that her memory does not work anymore. The caterpillar tries to comfort her and suggests she try to recite “You are old, Father William,” a reference to a well-known poem by Robert Southey (1774–1843), which begins as follows:

“You are old, Father William, the young man cried, The few locks which are left you are grey;
You are old, Father William, a hearty old man, Now tell me the reason, I pray” (Southey’s poem).

Whereas Alice recites the following:

“You are old, Father William,” the young man said, And your hair has become very white; And yet you incessantly stand on your head — Do you think, at your age, it is right? ” (Carroll’s Alice).

The translator did not provide a literal translation of the poem, which without a footnote would be meaningless to Jewish children (and in fact also for most English-speaking readers today). He searched instead for an equivalent in Hebrew. Unfortunately, at this stage of its development, the translator could not find in Hebrew children’s literature a poem that every child might know by heart. Hence, the translator retreated to the canonical reservoir of Jewish religious texts and offered a poem taken from the Haggadah, a text that is read aloud by all participants during Passover Seder. The translator could reasonably assume the text would be recognized by any of his readers, especially the selected portion, which is particularly popular with children:

“Who knows Seven? I know Seven! Seven are the days of the week, six are the orders of the Mishnah, five are the books of the Torah, four are the matriarchs, three are the

3 A Jewish ritual feast performed by a community or by multiple generations of a family, involving a retelling of the story of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_Seder

patriarchs, two are the tablets of the covenant, and one is our God in the heavens and on earth” (Haggadah).

Alice fails unfortunately to recite the text properly. The caterpillar interrupts her and mocks her with his own nonsensical substitutions. Embedding well-known phrases which refer to the Jewish canon obviously enhanced the domestication of the translated text.

3 Conclusion

We have seen that the domestication of translated literature for children was part of an effort to make the strange familiar and known. It involved the exchange of English or German first names for Hebrew names, the replacement of “Christian” holidays and customs with Jewish holidays and customs, as well as allusions and references to the Jewish canon. Needless to say that such translator’s decisions were not merely linguistic but rather cultural, resulting in translations which endeavored to accommodate the source texts to the cultural repertoire of the receiving system.

Epilogue

I would like to end with a personal anecdote.

One of my own translations that is closest to my heart is that of the wonderful American children’s classic, Charlotte’s Web by E. B. White. As a film based on the book was screened in Israel prior to the publication of the translation, the publisher insisted that we use the title of the film for the book, and thus the book was given the awkward title “The Magic Farm”. But this was my least challenging problem. Much more difficult was the Jewish aversion towards “pigs”.

The two main protagonists of Charlotte’s Web are the spider Charlotte, and Wilbur, who unfortunately was born as a pig. The story relates the miraculous way in which Charlotte manages to save Wilbur from a terrible fate. But – how can we present Wilbur the pig as a protagonist worthy of a young reader’s sympathy? The solution I found was an ad-hoc solution, and even today I feel uncomfortable about it. Wilbur the pig was called piggy.

I am not sure students of zoology would approve of this solution but everybody (except for the translator herself) felt happy about it.

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