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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Language and Linguistics***Boom in Arabic-English literary translation: A contextual analysis of geopolitics and patronage (2003-2020)**Raidah Al-Ramadan¹ , Bilal Sayaaheen², Mona Malkawi³^{1,2,3}Translation Department, Yarmouk University, Irbid, JordanCorrespondence: raidarmdn@yu.edu.jo**ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the boom in Arabic-English literary translation from 2003 to 2020. It hypothesizes that geopolitics and patronage have a major role in shaping the landscape of literary translation from Arabic, with geopolitics playing a more dominant role. The research is based on a corpus of 655 Arabic literary works translated into English in the period between 2003 and 2020, compiled from various online resources. The data is analyzed in terms of each country's contribution and the timeline of the translations. A contextualization of these translations is then provided by discussing political events and patronage initiatives in relation to the translated works. The analysis reveals a strong correlation between the patterns of translation from Arabic into English and regional politics and patronage, suggesting that they have sparked a surge of interest in Arabic literature among English-speaking audiences.

KEYWORDS: Arabic literature, corpus, geopolitics, patronage, translation.

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1. Introduction

Literature refers to written works, particularly those of artistic merit (Snir 2017, Widdowson 2013, Eagleton 2011, Robson, William Wallace, and William Wallace Robson 1984). A literary text is a text that is loaded with cultural values in a certain community and is constructed in a way that allows high levels of significance and complexity (Snir, 2017). A text, which might be deemed literary in one culture, may not hold the same status in another. Moreover, its classification may change between literary and non-literary over different time periods. For Widdowson (2013), a work is literary if it is written. Thus, texts produced or performed in non-written forms such as film scripts and song lyrics are deemed not literary. This paper adopts Widdowson's notion of a literary text, and only literary written texts (poetry and prose-fiction) are included in the corpus.

Arabic literature has deep roots in Arabic culture. The first sign of Arabic literature, according to (Huart 1903) started with poetry as a fully developed form in the pre-Islamic period of the sixth century CE. The advent of Islam and the revelation of the Quran had an enormous impact on Arabic literature (Kabiro Sabo 2019, Starkey 2006, Roger Allen 2005, and Roger Allen 2000). The Umayyad period (661–750) was characterized by the Graeco-Arabic translation movement, which contributed to the transmission of knowledge from ancient Greeks to Muslims (Pietruschka 2005, 17). Following the Umayyads, the Abbasid period (750–1258) was very prosperous in literature and translation and was referred to as the 'Golden Age' (Starkey 2006, 16).

Although Arabic literature has a long history in the Arab culture, its translation into other languages, is quite recent. This study hypothesizes that the interest in literary translation from Arabic into English between 2003 and 2020 is attributed to geopolitics and patronage with more influence from geopolitics.

2. Related studies

2.1 Pre-boom translations of modern Arabic literature into English

Modern Arabic Literature is the Arabic-language literature that was written after the Middle East and North Africa had started to be exposed to Western and European influence at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century (Starkey 2006, IX). The French campaign, which began in 1798 when Bonaparte invaded Egypt, set off a series of changes (Said 2006 & Govorunov Badawi 1993). Starkey (2006) further asserts that the French occupation led to a proliferation of Western literary works translated into Arabic by the end of the nineteenth century. The growing relationship between the West and the Arab World during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had impacted classical Arabic literature as new forms of Western literature such as drama, short stories, and novels were adopted by the Arabs.

Arabic literature received no interest from Western countries, particularly Britain and France until after the Second World War when limited numbers of Arabic works were translated into some European languages (Ettobi, 2008). However, interest increased when Naguib Mahfouz, the Egyptian writer, received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988. For Ettobi (2008) and Jacquemond (2009), Western interest in Arabic literature was not genuine and the works selected for English translation were those that confirmed certain stereotypical images of Arabs, reflecting the same images created by Orientalists' translations.

2.2 Periodization and the study of translation history

Periodization is recognized as an approach in the study of translation history (Snir 2017, López 2019, Altoma 2005, and Foz 2006). Snir (2017:176) defines it as a way of "ordering the past" and making it available for evaluation. It seeks to describe the diverse systems of poetic norms which characterize the literary works written in different points in time in search of explanations on reasons behind the change of these systems. López (2019) calls for the adoption of periodization to study translation history and urges scholars to query what periods they use and how they are related to their research analysis. López's same questions were previously addressed by Foz (2006) who considers periodization to be very systematic, arbitrary, and sometimes inaccurate. This is why some periods have not been agreed upon among historians and have been subject to redefinition by others. In this regard, Zarytovskaya (2022) argues that different conventions are adopted in naming and defining Arabic literature periods based on factors including language, religion, national and cultural domination among others. Altoma (2005) adopts periodization to trace the translation of Arabic literary works into English between 1947-2003. He compiles Arabic literary works translated into English in that period and examined their contexts in relation to geopolitics. He divides the study period into three subperiods: 1947-1967, 1968- 1988, and 1988 to 2003, each

corresponding to major geopolitical events in the Arab World. His first period, which extends from the Second World War until the Arab Israeli war, marks the beginning of Western interest in Arabic literature as the Arab world went through considerable social and cultural changes. The second period, which extends from the Arab Israeli war until Mahfouz's reception of the Nobel Prize in 1988, is characterized by increased interest in Arabic literature and the translation of a larger number of Arab authors. The third period, which extends from 1988 until 2003, also witnesses an increase in translations particularly after the September 11 events that took place in 2001.

The current study seeks to pursue Altoma's work by compiling the Arabic literary works in English translation from 2003 to 2020. It further seeks to examine these translations within their context in relation to geopolitics and patronage. To further illustrate the paper's argument, the findings of the current paper are collated with the findings of Altoma's third period as it is the one with the highest number of translations.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

A corpus of Arabic literary works in English translation, translated between 2003 and 2020, was collected from online resources. These resources included, but not restricted to, Banipal Magazine of Modern Arab Literature, the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, Archipelago Books, Maclehosepress, The Arab British Centre, Atlantic Books, Clockroot Books, The American University in Cairo Press, Goodreads, Rochester, Bloomsbury, Google Books, and Amazon Books. The research also benefited from the report of Buchler and Guthrie (2011, 94-146) in which translations of Arabic literature in Britain from 1990 to 2010 were listed.

3.2 Data analysis

The corpus was refined to eliminate repetitiveness, resulting in a final catalogue of 655 translated works from Arab countries. Although much effort was made to incorporate an extensive range of works translated from Arabic, no doubt many have been overlooked due to the challenges associated with finding resources that furnish such information. The data were then analyzed in terms of each country's contribution and the years in which these translations were translated. And finally, a contextualization of the translations was carried out in relevance to geopolitics and sponsorship.

4. Findings

4.1 Arabic literary Works in English translation between 2003 and 2020

The analysis reveals a significant increase in the number of translations from 2003 to 2020 as presented in Figure 1

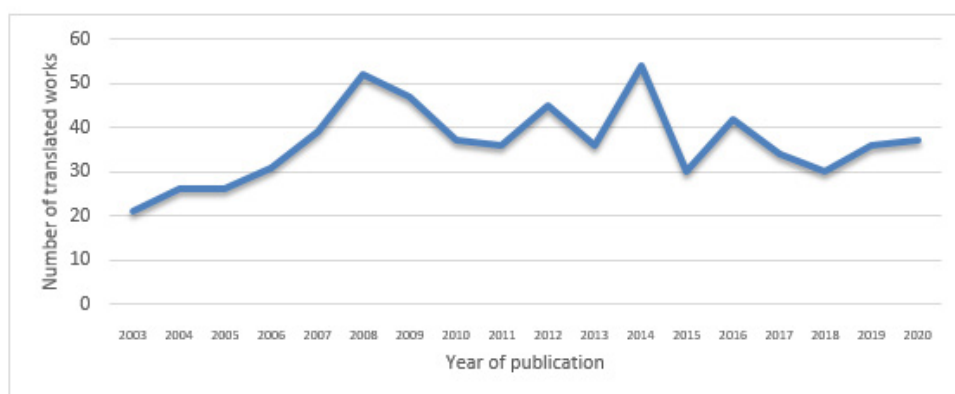


Figure 1. Arabic literature in English translation between 2003 and 2020.

The beginning of the study period signifies a significant rise in the quantity of translated works. In 2003, a mere of 21 translations appeared in English translation. This figure rose significantly to 52 in 2008. However, a decline is observed from 2009 onwards reaching 36 in 2011. A brief resurgence occurred in 2012 with 45 translations and the figure fell again to 36 in 2013. Interestingly, a leap is observed from 2013 to 2014, with a record of 54 works, which can be argued to be a remarkable point in the history of Arabic literature in English

translation. Nevertheless, this increase is followed by a decrease in 2015 where 30 works were translated and then they went up to 42 in 2016. A slight decrease is observed in the following two years with 34 works in 2017 and 30 in 2018. Again, from 2018 onwards, numbers go up reaching 36 in 2019, and 37 in 2020.

4.2 Arabic literary works in English translation between 1988 and 2020

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the paper's argument, the findings are collated with Altoma's research, which covers the period from 1988 to 2003 (2005, 74-91). Refer to Figure (2).

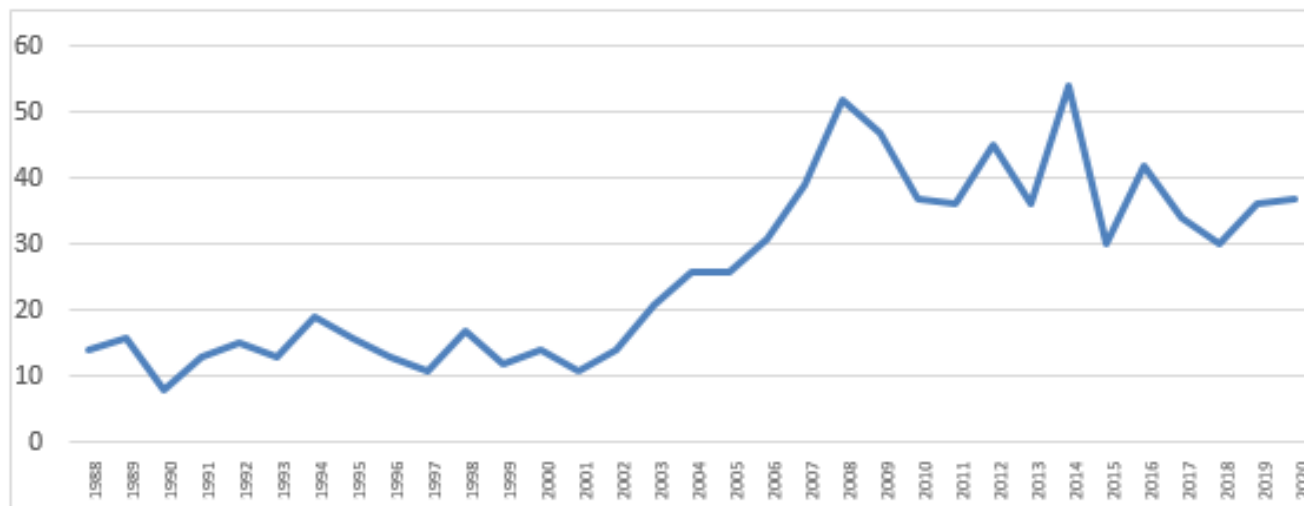


Figure 2. Arabic literature in English translation between 1988 and 2020.

Figure (2) shows a remarkable increase in literary translation from Arabic into English starting from 2001 onwards, two years prior to the study period (post 9/11 events). Prior to that (1988 to 2001), the figures were rising and falling slightly, recording the highest of 19 works in 1994. In 2001, only 11 works were translated. However, a gradual increase is noticed in the following years as pointed out in the previous section.

4.3 Contextualizing translations

Arabic literature has been viewed as either “embargoed” (Said, 1994: 372) or as governed by the commercial risk that impedes its dissemination in the English language (Clark, 2000). Recently, a remarkable shift has been observed as Arabic literature has begun to gain the attention of Western publishers. This new interest is arguably attributed to the change of geopolitical landscapes and to the increased commercial interest among non-Arabs and Arabs to promote Arabic literature that speaks to the Western audience. Figure 3 shows the contribution of each Arab country in the study period.

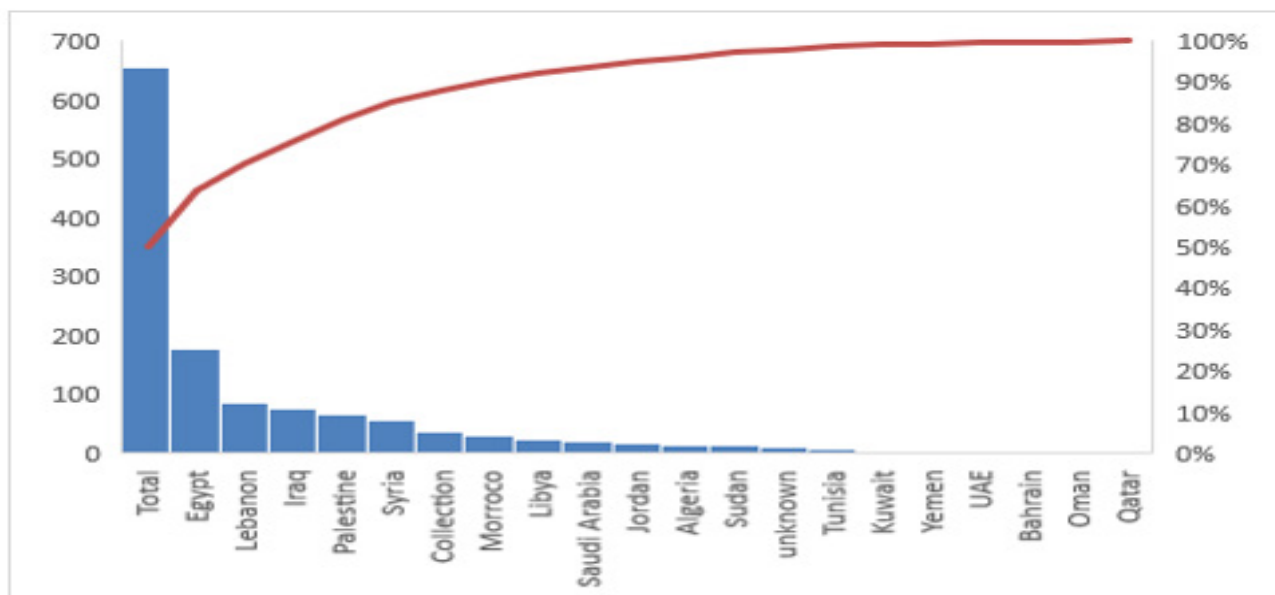


Figure 3. Arab countries' contribution of translated literature into English between 2003 and 2020

Figure 3 reveals a correlation between the number of translated works and the countries that have experienced geopolitical events. The five countries with the most translations (Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, and Syria) have all been sites of war and conflicts. In contrast, the least translated countries (Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, and United Arab Emirates) have been relatively stable during the period under study. A discussion of the political context is provided along with the role of patronage in the translation process.

4.3.1 *Geopolitics and the translation of Arabic literature*

Several geopolitical events took place before or during the study period that are argued to contribute to the surge of interest in translating Arabic literature. This includes The September 11 events, the Second War in Iraq, Arab Spring events, and the Syrian war. The 9/11 events marked a significant turning point in global politics as well as culture and literature. In a video interview with the literary figure André Naffis-Sahely, Humphrey Davies (2011), the award-winning British translator of Arabic literature, says the 9/11 events spurred further interest in Arabic literature, referring to it as a turning point when “the West as a whole — whatever that means — sort of woke up to the fact that they wanted to know, understand better, what happens in the Arab world and that literature is a route to doing that.” Pierpont (2010) adds that modern Arabic novels provide American readers with “arrays of answers to questions we did not know we wanted to ask.” It is, as Hartman (2018:1) puts it, “about ‘us’ understanding ‘them’, about what ‘we here need to know about mysterious people who live and events that happen somewhere called over there.’” Hartman says that Pierpont invoked a discourse that holds Arabic literature as something that can be discovered, and that this approach is still dominant in the North American Academy because instead of being integrated into mainstream literary curricula, Arabic literature is still taught as sources and as exemplary documents in history and political science courses.

Sayaheen (2016) examines the English translations of Arabic works published in the US before and after 9/11 as reflected in paratexts. Through analyzing the cultural framework, which involves main concepts of polysystem theory, as well as the social framework, which involves human agents, i.e., authors, translators, and publishers, Sayaheen argues that 9/11 had a significant role in shaping the production and reception of the Arabic works in English translation, adding that the reasons why certain authors, themes, or genres are selected for translation are far from being literary (183).

4.3.2 *Patronage and the translation of Arabic literature*

Patronage is defined by the Meriam-Webster dictionary as ‘the support or influence of a patron’. A patron can be an individual, religious or political party, publisher or media among others. Al-Dabbagh (2015) argues that the translation of Arabic fiction is carried out by various patrons including publishers, magazines, and websites, who are responsible for the selection of which works to be translated and which translators to carry out the translation. Publishers are either commercial or academic. While commercial publishers seek commercial interest, academic publishers, who are basically university presses, aim to disseminate Arabic literature (Al-Dabbagh, 2015. P.793). They also use such translations as sources or exemplary documents in history and political science courses (Hartman (2018:1). Publishers, regardless of their agendas, have played a crucial role in determining the kinds of works to be selected for English translation. Marilyn Booth (2010), a British translator of Arabic fiction, considers publishers, editors, agents, and sometimes, authors more powerful players than translators who are usually criticized for making bad choices of texts to translate. In translating *Girls of Riyadh*, a novel by Saudi author Rajaa al Sanea, Booth recounts her experience of having her work rejected and modified by the publisher, who made an agreement with the author. In doing so, Booth was credited as a co-translator alongside Al Sanea. She adds that Penguin Books, the publisher, chose the translation of the author to challenge the notion that a “first world” translation may have the power to shape the “third world” text, which has been prevalent in postcolonial translation studies (3).

4.3.3 *Discussion*

A remarkable increase in the numbers of translated works from Arabic following 9/11 is noticed (figure 2). In 2001, the year in which the events occurred, a modest number of 11 works were translated. However, a boom is noticed in the ensuing years, recording 52 translations in 2008 alone and a total of 195 works over the eight-year span. The period from 1988 to 2001 shows little translation activity with 19 works in 1994 and a total

of 181 over a twelve-year span. The data suggests a potential correlation with the Gulf War, which may have contributed to the increase. A closer examination of Figure (2) shows a mere 8 translations in 1990, the year of the Gulf War. However, a subsequent rise is observed as 13 translations are observed in 1991, 15 in 1992, a dip to 13 in 1993, and a rise to 19 in 1994. The numbers of the translations fluctuated between 11 and 19 and then they began to sharply rise post 9/11 from 2001 onwards, indicating a significant impact of the 9/11 events on the translation of Arabic literature.

The Second War in Iraq, which spanned from 2003 to 2011 and coincided with the post 9/11 events, resulted in the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. The US-led invasion of Iraq has brought significant shifts in the Iraqi literature. Iraqi writers, after a period characterized by censorship, have sought to revive the social realism which was predominant in the 1960s and 1970s. However, war remains a dominant theme in the Iraqi literature addressing conflict and its effects on people and society Hanoosh (2013). The post-war fiction in Iraq that is translated into English is surveyed by Yako (2017, 1) who reveals war as a major theme. Surveying the translated fiction from Iraq into English after the 2003 War, a theme pattern of war and exile is noticed. This suggests only works that depict war are selected for translation.

Iraq ranks third among the Arab countries in terms of the number of translations. Out of the 655 works, 75 were selected from Iraq constituting 13.58 % of the total corpus: 3 in 2003, 5 in 2004, 4 in 2005, 3 in 2006, 4 in 2007, 8 in 2008, 10 in 2009, 4 in 2010, 6 in 2011, 2 in 2012, 5 in 2013, 5 in 2014, 2 in 2015, 3 in 2016, 1 in 2017, 5 in 2018, 3 in 2019, and 2 in 2020. The publishing houses that published Iraqi fiction in English translation are all US and UK based except for the AUC Press (the American University in Cairo press) which is based in Egypt. A total of 32 translations were published by US based houses, 27 by UK based houses and 16 by the Egypt based AUC Press. Interestingly, 30 translations were published by university presses including Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Harvard University Press, University of Arkansas Press, Yale University Press, University of Texas, Georgetown University Press, among others. This period has also seen increased interest in Iraqi women's literature, as among the 75 Iraqi works in English translation, 20 were written by Women authors including Dunya Mikhail, Alia Mamdouh, Batool Khedairi, Haifa Zangana, Inaam Kachachi among others. Abou Rashed (2020) explores the works of Iraqi women writers (Alia Mamdouh, Inaam Kachachi, Samira Al-Mana, Betool Khedairi, Hadiya Hussein, and Daizy Al-Amir) who have turned to translation as a way of preserving their stories beyond conventional geopolitical borders. Drawing on feminist translation analysis to re/read their stories', she explains how translation has contributed to their stories moving across charged borders of dictatorship, war, sanctions and exile while interrogating their geopolitical scope. The prevalent themes of Iraqi women authors include war, exile and loss, which seem to attract western publishers. The renowned translator of Arabic literature, Roger Allen, notices an emerging trend among Arab women authors. He observes a shift in their writing which seems to be tailored to align with the "preconceptions and biases of a Western readership" (in Büchler and Guthrie, 2011, 68).

An illustrative example can be found in the contributions of the liberal Iraqi writer Dunya Mikhail, who was compelled to leave to the USA in 1995, during a time of censorship. Mikhail's works garnered considerable attention from Western publishers, featuring the increasing interest in such narratives. Her poetry collection *The War Works Hard* (2006) won the PEN's Translation Fund award in 2004 and was named by the New York Public Library one of the best books of 2005. Her *Diary of a Wave Outside the Sea* (2009), a feminist memoir in which she expresses a woman creative mind experiencing a male world, won the Arab American Book Award in 2010. In *Beekeeper of Sinjar: Rescuing the Stolen Women of Iraq* (2018), Mikhail tells the traumatic stories of Iraqi women who manage to escape ISIS, and in *In Her Feminine Sign* (2019), *Iraqi Nights* (2014), she focuses on women experiences.

Similar themes have been the focus of other Iraqi authors including Hassan Blasim (5 translated works), Fadhil Al-Azzawi (4), Mahmoud Saeed (4), Muhsin Al-Ramli (4), Sinan Antoon (3) among others. Blasim depicts the violence and the miserable experiences of refugees in *God 99* (translated in 2020), *Corps Exhibition* (2014), *Madman of Freedom Square* (2013), and *Iraqi Christ* (2013). Muhsin Al-Ramli has published more than 30 books in Arabic and Spanish, including short stories, plays, translations and novels. The English translation of his novel *Scattered Crumbs* (2000) won the American Translation Award, which is sponsored by the University of Arkansas Press in 2002. His novels *Dates on My Fingers* (2008) and *The President's Gardens* (2012) were longlisted for the IPAF in 2010 and 2013. The English version of *The President's Gardens* won the PEN Translates

Award in 2016 and the Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Literary Translation in 2018. His novel *The Wolf of Love and Books* (2015) was shortlisted for the Sheikh Zayed Book Award in 2015, and *Sons and Shoes* (2018) was longlisted for the Award in 2019 all dealing with war and its consequences. The analysis of the thematic patterns of Iraqi translated literature reveals that 'Adab al-Ma'raka', or 'War Literature' has sparked a surge of interest in Iraq and its literature (online source: Britanica.com), as well as interest in the Middle East.

Western interest has not been limited to literary translation from Arabic; it has also become an interest in the Arabic language and culture, particularly during the events of the Arab Spring. The wave of pro-democracy protests and uprisings that took place in the Middle East and North Africa beginning in late 2010 was marked by intense transformation that affected political landscapes as well as the production and reception of Arabic literature. In a report by (M Lynx Qualey 2014), a literary agency operating in Europe and specializing in contemporary Arabic literature, Arabic language ranks fourth in terms of the most translated literary languages in the US in 2014, after French, German, and Spanish. Arabic is now considered a critical language, and the US is striving to teach it to Americans as it serves their political aims. In this regard, Qualey states: "As we translate more and more Arabic literature, I would like to see it take its place as a literature, and not as a means to an end." (2014)

The 2011 Egyptian Revolution, which demanded the overthrow of Mubarak's presidency, ended with his resignation on February 11, 2011, and the transfer of power to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Following this, the Muslim Brotherhood took power and in 2012 Mohamed Morsi was elected as president. However, Morsi failed to pass an Islamic-leaning constitution, which sparked a general outrage among secularists and the army creating mass protests. In 2014, General El-Sisi was elected as president (Meital, 2006, 3).

In the current study, Egypt ranks first in terms of the number of translated works representing 27.3 % of the corpus with a total number of 179 works. As mentioned earlier, this could be attributed to the political situations there from the days of the French occupation and the awarding. It is also attributed to the receiving of the Nobel Prize by Mahfouz, which has played a major role in the history of American reception of modern Arabic literature that had been mostly invisible to Americans. In 2005, coinciding with the elections, a mere of 7 works were translated. However, an increase in translation is observed in the subsequent years as 14 works were translated in 2006, and 17 each in 2007 and 2008. Then, gradual decline is noticed reaching 16 in 2009, 11 in 2010 and 8 in 2011. The emerging pattern from the data suggests that in the years marked by a major event, fewer translations are observed. However, it is followed by an upsurge. Over time, the surge appears to fade resulting in a decrease in translations. In 2011, when Arab Spring events began, a drop in the same year is noticed. Following 2011, they start to go up until 2015 and then drop again as more interest is believed to be shifted to Syria.

In the Egyptian context, the AUC Press, a prominent English-language academic book publisher closely affiliated with the American University in Cairo (AUC), plays a crucial role in translating Arabic fiction. AUC Press had a pivotal role in bringing Mahfouz's novels to English-speaking audiences by signing a publishing agreement with him, which led to the translation of all his works into English and other Western languages. In 1996, the AUC Press established the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature, an award that, in addition to the cash prize, translates and publishes the winning novel in English (AUC website). In the study period, 17 authors won the prize including 8 Egyptians, 2 Syrians, 2 Palestinians, 1 Saudi, 1 Lebanese, 1 Algerian, 1 Iraqi, and 1 Sudanese. Out of the 17 prizes, 7 were awarded to women writers (3 Egyptians, 2 Palestinians, 1 Saudi and 1 Iraqi). Out of the 179 translations from Egypt, the AUC press published 92 and the rest were published by publishers from US and UK. AUC Press published 161 out of the 655, constituting 24.5% of the total corpus, which shows an example of the role of patronage in promoting Arabic literature.

Lebanon ranks second among Arab countries in terms of the number of translations. A total of 85 works were translated, constituting 12.9% of the corpus. It is well-known that Lebanon is at the heart of tension that is powered by the Israeli-Arab conflict. Further, Southern Lebanon is still an active front line between Israel and Lebanon. Thus, the situation in Lebanon is interconnected with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In 2003 and 2004, two translations were published per year. In 2005, 5 works were translated. However, the following year, 2006, no translations were recorded. This year was marked by the 2006 Lebanon War, which took place in northern Israel and the Golan Heights and ended when a ceasefire was enforced by the United Nations resolution in August 2006. In the aftermath of this war, a renewed interest in Lebanese literature is

noticed as 5 works were translated in 2007 and 8 in 2008, 5 works in 2009, 5 in 2010 and 8 in 2011. Interest in Lebanese literature is noticed to decline in 2020 as a mere of 2 translations were recorded. Lebanese literature has also handled themes of war, violence and identity. Many authors, including Khalil Gibran (11 works in translation), Elias Khouri (9), Jurji Zaydan (6), Huda Barakat (3), Hanan Al-Shaykh (2), Fatima Sharafeddin (2), and Alexandre Najjar (2) have achieved international acclaim as their themes include, in addition to war, social issues such as religious corruption and women rights. Examples include Gibran's *Broken Wings* (2009), Al-Shaykh's *Occasional Virgin* (2018) and *Locust and the Bird: My Mother's Story* (2009), and Najjar's *The Schools of War* (2013). Out of the 85 translated works from Lebanon, 7 were published in the Arab World: 2 by the AUC Press and 5 by the Zaidan Foundation. A total of 78 were published by UK and US based houses among which 13 were published by university presses.

Palestine ranks fourth with 65 works representing 9.9% of the total corpus. There was increased interest in translating Palestinian literature into English after the September 11 attacks. The number of translated works started to rise from 2004 onwards, reaching 8 translations in 2010. However, in 2011, the year in which the Arab Spring events occurred, a mere of 2 translations were recorded. Subsequently, interest in translation picked up again until 2015 when increased violence during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resulted in the "Jerusalem Intifada". Translated Palestinian literature mostly explores political themes such as occupation, resistance, displacement, and conflict. Examples include the works of Mahmoud Darwish (15 works), Sahar Khalifa (7), Najwan Darwish (4), and Adania Shilbi (4) among many others. Darwish is perceived as a Palestinian symbol and a spokesman for the Arab opposition to Israel. His works were published in more than 20 languages, and he won many awards including the "Cultural Freedom Prize" by the American Lannan Foundation. His poetry echoes the pain of exile, disposition and resistance as in *If I were another* (2009), *River Dies of Thirst* (2010), and *Palestine as Metaphor* (2019). Sahar Khalifa writes on similar themes including her novels *Wild Thorns* (2005) and *The End of Spring* (2008). Both works offer a view of the Palestinian resistance and struggle in the face of colonialism or political corruption (Cotter 2011, 2-3). Other works of Khalifa include *Of Noble origins* (2012), *My First and Only Love* (2020), *Passage to the Plaza* (2020), *Inheritance* (2005), and *Image, the Icon, and the Covenant* (2008). Najwan Darwish is described by The New York Review of Books as "one of the foremost contemporary Arab poets". In 2010, he was selected as one of the 39 promising Arab writers in the Beirut³⁹. His poetry is translated into English and other language including Spanish. His works *Nothing More to Lose* (2014), *Embrace* (2020), *Exhausted in the Cross* (2020), and *Sleeping in Gaza* (2020) were published in English translation. All Palestinian writers that were selected for English translation wrote about war, resistance, and exile. The 65 translations from Palestine were published by 25 publishing houses based in the UK and the US except for the AUC which published 5. Among the 25 publishing houses, 14 were academic university presses.

Syria has made significant contributions to Arabic literature in English translation ranking fifth in terms of the number of works selected for English translation. Syria contributed 55 works representing 11.9% of the total corpus. From 2003 until 2010, only 20 works were translated. However, between 2011 and 2020, there were 41 translations. In 2015, only one work of literature was seen in English translation, a year, which according to the UN Refugee Agency, witnessed the biggest wave of migration since World War II as 1.3 million people arrived Europe seeking asylum (www.unhcr.org). This year was followed by an increase in translations, reaching a total of 7 in 2017. The Syrian revolution has aroused interest in literature that addresses the Syrian conflict and the Syrian's experiences of displacement and war horrors, themes that attracted Western publishers. Alshamsi, Qbilat, & Almazaidah (2024) notice a surge in novelistic achievements among Syrian novelists in the post 2011 era. Driven by the newfound sense of freedom, the post 2011 novels moved from the traditional forms to realistic and emotionally charged expressions to address Syria's social and political upheavals.

They infused their literary works with themes that revealed what was forbidden. Examples include the works of Osama Alomar (8 works were translated between 2010 and 2017) and Samar Yazbek, who is seen as a rebel against societal conventions and writes on themes of violence, dependence and violation. Interestingly, in 2012, Yazbek won the PEN/Pinter Prize International writer of courage award in recognition of her book *A Woman in the Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution*, which was translated into many languages including English and French. She also won the Swedish Tucholsky Prize, the Dutch Oxfam/PEN prize in the same year, and the French "Best Foreign Book" prize in 2016. In the study period, six of her works were translated

into Western languages including *Cinnamon* (2012), *In Her Mirrors* (2010), *The Crossing: My Journey to the Shattered heart of Syria* (2015), *The Blue pen* (2017), *The One Who Walks* (2017), and *19 Women: Tales of Resilience from Syria* (2018). Shahla Ujayli also wrote about war and how it changes concepts of identity and nation. Two of her novels: *A Sky Close to Our House* in 2016 (translated in 2018), and *Summer with the Enemy* in 2019 (translated in 2020) were shortlisted for the IPAF award. Khalid Khalifa is another Syrian writer whose works were selected for English translation including *No Knives in the Kitchens*, which was awarded the Najib Mahfouz Prize for Literature in 2013 (English translation in 2016), *Death is Hard Work*, which was shortlisted for the National Book Awards and was translated in 2019, and *In Praise of Hatred*, which was longlisted for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize in 2013 and has been translated into several languages. Syrian fiction of war has garnered the attention of Western publishers, leading to their selection for English translation.

In terms of patronage, 150 publishing houses contributed to the selection and publication of the 655 works in English translation. Most of these houses have Anglophone affiliation: 74 in the US, 49 in the UK. 6 in Canada, 2 in Germany, 1 in Netherlands, and 1 in New Zealand. Exceptions include 10 in the Arab World, 3 in India, 3 in Hong Kong, and 1 in Israel. Other forms of patronage include awards and prizes, which seek to encourage translators to engage with Arabic literature and recognize its translation to English and other Western languages. Examples include the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF) or “Arabic Booker Prize”, Banipal Prize for Arabic literary Translation, Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and international Understanding, Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation, Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature, and Katara Prize for Arabic novel.

Fähndrich (2016) argues that when translation from Arabic into Western languages is brought into discussion, “Myths, clichés and reproaches readily surface” viewing it as an obstacle in the face of promoting Arabic literature in translation. The obstacle, according to Fähndrich, was created by the influence of the *Arabian Nights*, which degraded the perception of Arabic literature into a cliché, making it difficult to promote contemporary Arabic literature as it does not correspond to that cliché. However, the situation is recently changing thanks to the literary prizes, particularly the “Arabic Booker” which Fähndrich considers an important source of information about Arabic literary publications, and along with the “unflagging efforts” of committed translators, a stage of “normalization” may finally prevail. The international prize for Arabic fiction (IPAF) has been awarded annually since 2008. It has contributed to the selection of 13 novels for English translation: 2 from Egypt (2008 & 2009), 2 from Saudi Arabia, (2010 & 2017), 2 from Lebanon (2012 & 2019), 2 from Palestine (2016 & 2018), 2 from Tunisia (2015 & 2020) 1 from Morocco (2011), 1 from Kuwait (2013), and 1 from Iraq (2014). The Banipal Prize for Arabic literary Translation was established in 2005 to award translators of a published English translation of a literary Arabic work published after, or during, the year 1967 and first published in English translation in the year prior to the award. In the following year, the prize was sponsored by Omar Saif Ghobash and became known as The Saif Ghobash – Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation. The first prize was awarded to Humphrey Davies, for translating *Gate of the Sun* by Elias Khoury in 2006. Winning translators include Farouk Mustafa (2007) for translating *The Lodging House* by the Egyptian Khairy Shalaby, Fady Joudah (2008) for translating *The Butterfly's Burden* by Mahmoud Darwish, Samah Selim (2009) for translating *The Collar and the Bracelet* by the Egyptian Yahya Taher Abdullah, Humphrey Davies (2010) for translating *Yalo* by Lebanese Elias Khoury, Khaled Mattawa (2011) for translating *Adonis: Selected Poems*, Roger Allen (2012) for translating *A Muslim Suicide* by Moroccan Bensalem Himmich, Jonathan Wright (2013) for translating *Azazeel* by Egyptian Youssef Ziedan, Paula Haydar (2014) for translating *June Rain* by Lebanese Jabbour Douaihy, Paul Starkey (2015) for translating *The Book of the Sultan's Seal* by Egyptian Youssef Rakha, Jonathan Wright (2016) for translating *The Bamboo Stalk* by Kuwaiti Saud Alsanousi, Robin Moger (2017) for translating *The Book of Safety* by Egyptian Yasser Abdel Hafez, Luke Leafgren (2018) for translating *The President's Gardens* by Iraqi Muhsin al-Ramli, Leri Price (2019) for translating *Death is Hard Work* by Syrian Khaled Khalifa, and Kay Heikkinen (2020) for translating *Velvet* by Palestinian Huzama Habayeb. Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and international Understanding was established in 2015 to honor translators and to encourage individuals, publishing houses, as well as Arab and non-Arab institutions to translate from Arabic. In the study period, five translators received the award: William Hutchence in 2019 for translating *Small Death* by Muhammad Hassan Alwan, and Leary Price for translating *The Woman who walks* by Samar Yazbek. In 2020, it was awarded to Robert Myers and Nada Saab for translating *Sentence to Hope* by Sa'dallah Wannus,

Jonathan Wright for translating *Fihris* by Sinan Antun, and Adil Babikr for translating *Mansi: A Rare Man in His Own Way* by Al Tayyib Salih.

Academic institutions have also played a crucial role in promoting Arabic literature in English translation. From 2003 to 2020, 254 out of 655 translations were sponsored by Academic institutions representing 38.7% of the total corpus. The Academic institutes include AUC press (161), Syracuse University Press New York (36), Oxford University Press (15), University of Texas (15), New York University Press (9), Yale University Press (7), Michigan State University Press (6), Cambridge Scholars Newcastle (3), University of Arkansas Press Fayetteville (2), Columbia University Press New York (1), and Harvard University Press (1).

5. Conclusion

This paper attempted to explore the impact of geopolitics and patronage on the translation of Arabic literature into English between 2003-2020. It argued that political events that occurred in the Arab World have played a major role in the interest in Arabic literature which has led to an increased selection of literary works for English translation. It also argued that patronage, regardless of their aims be it commercial or academic, has also contributed to the boom in the translation of Arabic literature. The analysis of the corpus showed patterns of literary translation from Arabic into English that correlate with the political events that occurred in the Arab region. It showed an increase in the number of translations following every political event, which emphasizes the hypothesis of the paper that the interest in Arabic literature is governed by politics and the interest is in the “other”. Arabic literature in English translation has served as a means through which the Arabs are better understood by Western audiences.

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