Agents in Translation: Bridging Gaps or Consolidating Stereotypes.

The Case of the English and French Translations of
Alaa Al-Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building*


Ottman Boutrig


A Thesis

In

The Department

of

Études Françaises


Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts (Translation Studies) at

Concordia University

Montréal, Québec, Canada


August, 2012

**CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY**
**School of Graduate Studies**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Ottman Boutrig

Entitled: Agents in Translation: Bridging Gaps or Consolidating Stereotypes. The Case of the English and French Translations of Alaa al-Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building*

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Arts (Translation Studies)**

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final Examining Committee:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Sherry Simon** | Chair |
| **Paul Bandia** | Examiner |
| **Hélène Buzelin** | Examiner |
| **Debbie Folaron** | Supervisor |

Approved by _____

Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

_____2012          _____

Dean of Faculty

**ABSTRACT**

**Agents in Translation: Bridging Gaps or Consolidating Stereotypes.**
**The Case of the English and French Translations**
**of Alaa al-Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building***

**Ottman Boutrig**

Informed by the theoretical framework mainly derived from Pierre Bourdieu's cultural theory applied to translation, this thesis looks into the English and French translations of Alaa al-Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building.* Addressing the issue of the author's and the translator's habitus, we argue that Alaa al-Aswany's habitus as a left-wing Egyptian intellectual influenced the way he has handled his characters. We also explain how Humphrey Davies's habitus as a professional American translator contracted by the American University in Cairo Press affects the way he renders the novel in English, and that Gilles Gauthier's enjoyment of the novel finds, likewise, its explanation in his habitus in French. To probe yet another critical role in translation, we grapple with questions concerning the book industry and the power relations governing the international circulation of books. In this respect, we shed light on the role of the English version publishers- the American University in Cairo Press and Harper Perennial - and the French publisher Actes Sud, using the concepts of symbolic capital and field theory of Bourdieu. Since the context of reception determines the potential meaning(s) generated by a given literary work, we also look into the verbal and the non-verbal elements, such as illustrations, prefaces and footnotes that accompany the novel and study some articles/reviews of the work in the Western press to show how they were intended to shape the reader's response.

# Acknowledgement

I would like to express my extreme gratitude to my supervisor Debbie Folaron for her invaluable guidance and instructive feedback. It would be invidious to single out particular people for thanks, but I am pleased to acknowledge my sincere indebtedness to professor Jean-Marc Gouanvic for his encouragement. My thanks also go to my wife whose love and understanding meant so much to me, and to my kids, who have added so much to my life.

**Table of Contents**

# INTRODUCTION: THE DEATH OF THE TRANSLATOR[1]

In his collection of essays ``The Rustle of Languages″ (1989 [1984])*,* the French literary critic Roland Barthes published a small essay in which he announced authorial death, in the sense that the personal self of the author is temporally and epistemologically detached from the act of writing. According to Barthes, once the author starts writing, he loses his identity as an author and acts as no more than a scripter. ``When a fact is recounted″, he goes on to say ``this gap appears, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own demise″ (1989 [1984]). Drawing on Barthes's image of 'the death of the author', can we, by analogy, speak about the death of the translator in literary translation?

When looking at the history of literature in translation, it is all too easy to notice that it has, unfortunately, often been the case. It is hardly consoling to note that while translation has been the best means by which to achieve international acclaim and to transcend mortality for authors, it is seemingly synonymous to self-destruction for translators. By the very act of fulfilling their most ambitious aim of creating an author in translation, translators celebrate their own demise. At the very moment of sublimation, when the author starts a new cycle of existence in another language, the translator vanishes in a tragic way. With a few exceptions, people tend to read foreign authors as if they were breastfed in their own languages while the translator remains anonymous

---

[1] After having finished writing about 'the death of the translator' inspired by Roland Barthes' "the death of the author", I became aware that someone else had used this notion. I discovered in the online translation journal *Translatum* an article entitled ``the Death of the Translator″ by Filipina Filipova, assistant professor at the University of Sofia, Bulgaria. Using the expression from a different perspective, she maintains in her article that the translator is a reader /interpreter of the original text himself and that the obligation to be faithful to the original message represents a certain death for him.

outside a select circle of specialists. Lawrence Venuti is one translation scholar who believes that this fact stems from the translator himself, asserting that when the quest for transparent discourse prevails, the translator's invisibility inevitably ensues[2]. Like Venuti, we equally deplore that translation, even in its pragmatic form, remains an activity of abnegation and self-sacrifice par excellence. Our aim here, however, is not to expound on translation in terms of a foreignisation/domestication binary model. Rather, we adopt the perspective that the subordination of translation is not only due to the consolidation of transparent translation practices; indeed, it also finds its roots in some aspects of translation studies itself. Regretfully, recognizing the role of translators has been the exception rather than the rule until recently in the history of our discipline, and unfortunately early translation theories tended to obscure this role almost entirely. Not mindful of the need to consider the translator more prominently in their analyses, they saw no harm in relying on the text as a basis for investigation and a starting point for analysis. Fortunately, sociologically oriented approaches to translation have, along with new research methodologies, rekindled our hope of seeing the translator re-emerge from this earlier neglect, more confident and able to withstand the test of time.

In contrast to the central hypothesis of Barthes' 'death of the author', this thesis will argue that there is no frontier between what is personal and what is textual. Informed by the theoretical framework mainly derived from Pierre Bourdieu's cultural theory applied to translation, it contends that aspects such as the production, circulation and reception of works by social agents within both the source and receiving social spaces are important

---

[2] Cf. Venuti, Lawrence (2008 [1995]), *The Translator's Invisibility: a History of Translation,* London /New York, Routledge.

and must be accounted for. Recognition of these social agents and spaces allows us to facilitate and enhance our appreciation for the literary discourse of translation, and provides adequate insight into translation phenomena. Although it is crucial to remember that a Bourdieusian sociological approach to translation is based on Bourdieu's four notions of field, symbolic capital, illusio and habitus, we will limit myself here due to time and space constraints, to habitus and symbolic capital, fully cognizant that the four notions together constitute a fully-integrated four-angled paradigm. Furthermore, the notion of habitus (which we deal with in the third chapter) can hardly be dissociated from the notion of field.

This thesis is divided into five main chapters. After providing a brief history of Arabic literature in translation and an overview of translation studies (chapters one and two respectively), my third chapter defines the conceptual notion and space of habitus and addresses the habitus of the author and of both the translators included in this study. As such, it entails presenting the relevant biographical data of three key people: the Egyptian novelist Alaa al-Aswany; the British translator Humphrey Davies; and the French translator Gilles Gauthier. It likewise involves seeking out in the respective works of these specific agents all those elements that could shed light on their respective habituses. Starting from the assumption that habitus conditions and is conditioned by ˝ our sympathies and antipathies, affections and aversions, tastes and dislikes˝, and that it largely determines the ˝ people with whom we most durably associate ˝ (as observed by Bourdieu (2000, 150)), this initial phase will also seek to explain how Humphrey Davies' habitus as a professional British translator contracted by the American University in Cairo Press affected the way he ultimately rendered '*Imarat Ya'qoubian* into English.

Similarly, it will show that Gilles Gauthier's enjoyment of the novel finds its plausible explanation in his most deeply rooted self, i.e. his habitus. We shall then proceed to analyze selected passages of Humphrey Davies' and Gilles Gauthier's translations, respectively, in order to show how certain internal (textual) and external (i.e. extra-textual, including selection of texts to translate, etc.) preferences of these translators are explainable in relation to their respective habituses and in terms of their social trajectories. (Gouanvic 2007)

Since ˵to publish is to create″ (Sapiro 2008, 155), the fourth chapter of this thesis will involve probing yet another critical role in translation: to wit, that of the publisher. In his article ˵La Production de la Croyance″ (1977), Bourdieu maintains that the act of publishing an author, i.e. a veritable act of consecration that consists in endowing him with the publisher's symbolic capital- is tantamount to bringing him into existence. And since the author is a creator, publishing is in fact a 'creation of the creator' (Sapiro 2008; Bourdieu 1977). In light of this conception and assuming that the market of symbolic goods (cultural goods) has its own game rules in regards to its processes of production and appraisal, this chapter will grapple with questions relating to the relevance of power relations governing the field of publishing. This part of my work will shed light on the roles of the English version publishers, i.e. the American University in Cairo Press and Harper Perennial, as well as the French publisher Actes Sud. It will also investigate the power relations inherent to publishers and the publishing world using the concepts of symbolic capital and field provided to us by the theory of Bourdieu.

Acutely aware of the merits of considering translation in terms of a ¨sociology of the text˝ i.e. ¨ as a production in the process of being carried out, of the product itself and its consumption in the social fields, the whole seen in a relational manner ˝ (Gouanvic 2007)[3], we will devote the fifth chapter of this thesis to analyzing reception of *The Yacoubian Building* in the West. Since the context of reception determines the potential meaning(s) generated by a given literary work, which are in turn shaped by a combination of text and paratext, we shall first look into all the verbal and non-verbal elements, such as illustrations, prefaces and footnotes that accompany a work and confer it with a certain meaning (Genette 1991, 262). Then, we will proceed to study some articles/reviews of the work in the Western press to show how they were intended to shape the reader's response to the novel. Therefore, the fifth chapter of the thesis will reasonably raise relevant questions of reception in terms of whether the paratextual techniques used are actually implemented "to strengthen the cultural identity of minorities or to reinforce more or less stereotypical representations of foreign cultures." (Sapiro 2008, 163). By analyzing the paratext, we intend to show how this important aspect of a literary work is intended to structure its space of reception, directing and shaping, and certainly conditioning how the average Western reader understands Arabic culture for whom it is largely unknown except, perhaps, for *The Arabian Nights*. In order to put *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* into its appropriate historical perspective, we will begin by briefly contextualizing the work in the broader category of translated Arabic literature, of which Alaa al-Aswany and his contemporaries represent but a tiny chapter.

---

[3] Cited by Wolf, Michaela (2007) ¨The Emergence of a Sociology of Translation˝ in Wolf, Michaela ed., p.18.

## CHAPTER ONE: A BRIEF HISTORY OF ARABIC LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

In his attempt to explain the unbalanced circulation of translated books and works between the different language groups of the world, Johan Heilbron (2010, 308) proposes envisioning the international translation market as a world system having ˮa hierarchical structure, with central, semi-central and peripheral languagesˮ. It follows from Heilbron's definition of centrality that works in the Arabic language regrettably occupy a peripheral position in this international system of translation[4]. Yet, it cannot be overlooked that this Semitic language originating in the Arabian Peninsula is now the official language of 22 countries, and has a long translation tradition. According to Mona Baker,ˮthe Arabs are credited with initiating the first organized, large-scale translation activity in history.ˮ (2001[1998], 318) She maintains that their distinguished translation activity was unique insofar as it covered myriad source languages and fields of knowledge and was sponsored by a wide range of public and private institutions (ibid). Indeed, throughout its long history, translation has played an important role in the germination of ideas and cultural prosperity within the Arab-speaking world. The eighth-century Baghdad school, in operation for nearly three centuries, the twelfth-century Toledo school in southern Spain, and the school which emerged in Egypt and Lebanon in the second half of the nineteenth century, constitute three high watershed moments in the history of the Arabic translation tradition (Noureddine 2006, 111). However, despite these historical precedents, Arabic has fallen on less elegant times during the period of Western modernity. This fact is reflected not only in its status as a peripheral language in the international system but also

---

[4] According to Heilbron, Arabic, – along with Chinese, Japanese and Portuguese- has a large number of speakers but occupies a peripheral position in the international translation system, due to the fact that it comprises less than one percent of the international translation market. Heilbron underscores that the number of speakers of a language does not positively or negatively affect its position in this system.

in its quasi-absence from the "world republic of letters" as proposed by Casanova. It is the value of a language that determines its 'literariness' in this symbolic state. According to Casanova, "certain languages, by virtue of the prestige of the texts written in them, are reputed to be more literary than others, to embody literature" (Casanova 2004, 17). The position of Arabic in the international literary world might be due, in part at least, to the unbalanced or unfair laws of circulation inherent to this republic, where books belonging to the 'least endowed countries' have little chance of imposing themselves on the international scene. (ibid 2004, 17) Yet, it might also be argued that the relatively late introduction of the novel as a genre into the Arab world is one of the factors of this hopefully time-limited degradation. While historically poetry occupied a high place in the production of Arabic literature, the short story, the novel or drama did not exist as mature genres in this area of the world until the second half of the 20th century, thanks to contacts with Western culture. According to Salih J. Altoma (2005, 54), literary books in translation were so scarce because orientalists were doubtful as to the literary value of Arabic works of fiction even as late as the 1970s, tending to regard them quite often as no more than social documents or sources of anthropological insight.

The history of translation from Arabic into English and French in the pre-modern period (i.e. European Middle Ages to the end of World War II) may be traced back and organized in terms of five main periods: (Altoma Salih & Bray Julia (2000))[5]

ʬ   During the first period embracing the European Middle Ages, translations in Europe were exclusively carried out into Latin and included retranslations from

---

[5] We are also including Latin here because it was the main language in medieval Europe before the emergence of English and French as vernacular languages.

Arabic of Greek books belonging to such spheres of knowledge as philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and medicine. This period also comprised Robertus Ketenensis' Latin translations of the Qur'an. (1143)

- The second period from the European Renaissance to the 17th century involved other translations of the Qur'an including Alexander Ross' *Alcoran of Mahomet* published in 1649 on the basis of du Ruyer's *L'Alcoran de Mahomet* published two years earlier, as well as the compilation of Barthelemy d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale* (1697) based on various Arabic and Islamic sources.

- The third period starting from the first half of the 18th century witnessed the early English translations undertaken directly from Arabic such as Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* (1708) by Simon Ockley. In this period, Antoine Galland's *Les Mille et une Nuits*, served as a basis for an English translation and circulated widely in Europe.

- During the fourth period covering the 19th century, *The Arabian Nights* was retranslated directly many times from Arabic into various European languages and gained a wide readership. Nineteenth century translations into English of this book include Sir Richard Burton's *A Plain and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights*, now entitled *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night* (1885) and Rev. Edward Forster's *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* (1802-1810) (Loloi 2000). This phase was also marked by the creation in 1828 of the Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, a public institute which sponsored the publication of miscellaneous translations from Arabic.

✤ The end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century constitutes a leap forward both in terms of the number and the nature of Arabic books available in translation. Works translated include a verse translation by C. J. Lyall of pre-Islamic poetry and other translations of Arabic verse poetry up to the 13th century published in R.A. Nicholson's *Literary History of the Arabs* (1907).

According to Salih J. Altoma (2000), this modern period can subsequently be divided into three main stages:

The 1947-1967 period constitutes the years in which Arabic works of fiction were relegated to the background and received nearly no attention from literary actors in the West. Among the ten novels that appeared in English during this period, we find at-Tayyeb Salih's *The Wedding of Zein and Other Stories* (1967) translated by Johnson-Davies, and Nagīb Mahfūz's *Midaqq Alley* (1966) translated by Trevor Le Gassick. With regard to the latter, the renown Arabic literature specialist Roger Allen believes that even while omitting some of the Arabic text, especially chapters expressed with a religious flavour, Le Gassick did successfully reproduce the characteristics of Mahfūz 's style into English (2000, 891).

The volume of literary translations increased during the second period (1968-1988), with Arabic literature starting to gain a wider readership outside specialist circles. Even if translations of fiction during this time were not plentiful by any means, we witnessed the publication of second and even third editions of previous works. at-Tayyeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* by Denys Johnson-Davies, initially published with

Heinemann in 1969, was printed in a second edition by the same publisher in 1976, then in a third edition by Three Continents Press in 1981.

The awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Najīb Mahfūz in 1988 constituted a significant turn in the history of Arabic literature translated into Western languages. As a major manifestation of consecration, this international award clearly increased the symbolic capital (in Bourdieu's sense) of Arabic literature at large. Starting from 1988, Arabic works of fiction began to enjoy a more extensive readership and received more attention from the publishing industry actors (publishers obviously constitute only one of the actors), as reflected by the number of translated works and target languages. According to Büchler and Guthrie (2011): "close to 300 titles in the category of literature [...] were published in the last two decades [1990-2010], including 108 titles published by AUCP in Cairo [...] Translations from Arabic show a clear upward trend, reaching over twenty titles per year in the second half of the current decade" (p. 23). Awarding the Nobel Prize to any writer means recognizing that he or she not only belongs to a tradition that has reached a certain level of maturity, but also that the number of his or her works translated into Western languages has attained a certain threshold. This was particularly the case for Najīb Mahfūz, who was read in translation as early as 1966 and whose second volume of the *Trilogy* was published in French translation in 1987 by Philippe Vigreux. (Allen 2000, 891). Indeed, translation of Mahfūz's works has gone through two periods. In the pre-Nobel prize phase, Mahfūz assigned the translation rights of all languages to the American University in Cairo Press, while immediately after the announcement of the Nobel Prize he signed an exclusivity contract with the American Publisher Doubleday. From this point on, all aspects relating to the translation of his

works categorically changed, whether in terms of the readability of the translations, or their paratext or the commercialization process (Ibid). The Post-Nobel prize period of the laureate includes translations and retranslations of such novels as *The Thief and the Dogs* translated by Trevor Le Gassik and M.M. Badaoui and published by the American University in Cairo Press in 1984 and by Doubleday in 1993, as well as *The Mirrors* translated by Roger Allen and published by Bibliotheca Islamica in 1977 and by the American University in Cairo Press in 1999.

Despite the considerable rise in the number of translations from Arabic into other languages and the very positive impact of the Nobel Prize, Arabic literature has, until recently, nonetheless kept a low profile outside home; its publication has been confined to informed publishers and to a few languages. Yet, with a new generation of talented and prolific writers such as the Lebanese Ilyas Khouri, the Algerian Ahlam Moustaghanmi and particularly the Egyptian international best-seller Alaa al-Aswany, this rule seems to be breaking. Arabic literature is expanding its readership abroad and is shifting from the periphery to a less peripheral position in the international translation system. [6]

---

[6] To learn more about contemporary literary production see Badawi M.M. (ed.) Modern Arabic literature, and Salih J. Altoma (2005) Modern Arabic Literature in Translation: a companion

**CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Translation studies: an epistemological need**

Translation studies is the discipline that provides us with the indispensable theoretical and empirical tools for analyzing and understanding translation (-related) phenomena. Even if reflecting on the practice of translation is not a new endeavour, some practitioners of translation speaking from a pragmatist perspective continue to question the legitimacy of translation studies, believing its utility to be constrained to theoreticians.

History informs us that translators were the first people to write about their own craft. Cicero, the famous Roman rhetorician and translator, is often cited as the first to "theorize" the practice of translation in the Western tradition. His theoretical reflexions and practical advice on the process of translation from Greek to Latin, further developed by other practitioners like Horace, Quintilian, and Saint Jerome, were held in high esteem until the seventeenth century. (Robinson 1997, 7). Translation studies is now a well-established (inter)discipline (cf. Duarte et al. 2006), one that came into existence as an epistemological need[7]. Within the context of this thesis, discussion will necessarily be limited in scope, and will not aim to assess the diverse trends in translation studies. Rather than grapple with any existential questions relating to the relevance or legitimacy of translation studies as a sphere of knowledge, it will instead concentrate on giving a

---

[7] Mary Snell-Hornby states that translation studies greatly owes its emergence as a discipline to the pragmatic turn of the 1970s. According to her, the new developments in linguistics witnessed in this era conditioned our present view of what language is and encouraged the emancipation of translation studies as an independent discipline (2004, 47). Likewise, the papers included in the volume Gile et al. (2010) *Why Translation Studies Matters* display a remarkable unity of purpose. While covering several topics touching on translation, such as translator training, interpreting and psycholinguistics, they all stress the importance of translation studies as an epistemological need and highlight its contribution to other disciplines.

bird's eye view of the most influential insights in this currently well-established albeit ever-changing and ever-challenging field. These insights shall be contextualized in light of translation studies' recent perspective on the focus on translators. Even if the discipline has not been overly preoccupied with the role of translators throughout much of its history, the idea that a work of translation can exist outside a network of agents or that a translator cannot be the focus of study is becoming increasingly difficult to accept. Therefore, my thesis project assumes and will underscore the fact that any translation studies research ignoring the substantial role of translators is bound to yield a partial, and often inadequate, understanding of translation as a social phenomenon.

## 2.2 Translation Studies: a polyandrous discipline

If it were personified, translation studies would have been convicted of polyandry long ago. Since it gradually emerged over the past fifty years or so, it has been unfaithful to a single perspective, guilty of border-crossing and of massively borrowing from other fields of knowledge. The emergence in translation studies of myriad paradigms such as those equivalence-oriented (Jakobson, Nida), functionalist[8] (Reiss, Vermeer), descriptive (Even-Zohar, Lambert, Toury) and cultural (Lefevere, Bassnett)[9], and the borrowing from fields of knowledge as diverse as linguistics, comparative literature, psychology and sociology, to name but a few, have resulted in divergent perspectives producing different, and sometimes contradictory, results. Approaches adopted and adapted from other

---

[8]  Mary Snell-Hornby maintains, quoting Prunć, that the Czech scholar Jiri Levy, known in the English-speaking scientific community for his essay ″*Translation as a Decision Process*″ was avant-gardist in many respects. According to him ″from the teleological point of view, Levy sees translation as a process of communication. Prunć correctly points out (2001:219 ) that with the term teleological (from Greek teleo, end, purpose),  he was already anticipating Skopos theory ″ (2006, 23)

[9] Needless to say that these paradigms are fuzzy and interlinked enough in many respects that the theoretical reflections of a particular scholar may often fit into more than a single paradigm.

branches of learning were at times appropriated uncritically, making it difficult to reconcile incoherent orientations and to give a clearly defined identity to the field (Ruano 2006, 44). Seeking recourse in other disciplines, translation studies has been critiqued for not consistently seeking consensus on the basic tenets that would constitute a common ground, as has historically been the case in other fields. According to Ruano (2006, 44):

> In fact, in recent years, the discipline seems to have fallen prey to a general apprehension about multi-theoreticality or fear of theoretical profusion, to draw on Kirsten Malmkjaer's diagnosis (1993:132). Underlying this fear, it may be argued, there is in the first place a profound and persistent reverence for the initial dream of finding a holistic, overall theory of translation like that articulated clearly in the writings of James Holmes. Secondly, there may be also a suspicion that, in its development, translation studies is no longer pursuing this dream of searching for the evolved formula of 'unity in diversity' (cf. Bowker et al. 1998), but yielding instead to the diversification of a previous unity. i.e. to the disintegration of a global project in which some authors see evident totalizing aspiration.

Throughout its relatively short history, translation studies has been the battleground for different and sometimes conflicting approaches and methodologies[10]. Firstly, linguistics was regarded as the discipline that could most properly embrace translation. The early translation theories, strictly speaking, were therefore linguistics-oriented, with translation studies normally being treated as a sub-category of applied linguistics. Even if translation

---

[10] Andrew Chesterman criticizes our current oppositions between the linguistic context and the cultural context, or the ¨cultural turn″ that would soon replace the purely linguistic analysis of texts. He argues that these oversimplified dichotomies reflect a mistaken belief, since many approaches fall on borderline areas. Linguistics, for example, has expanded far beyond syntactic analysis to include cognitive grammar while more and more translation research is relying on cognitive processes. The work grouped under the ¨cultural turn″ also seems closer to sociology than to cultural studies. (cf. Chesterman 2006)

practice is as old as recorded history, it has often been relegated to the background and

considered secondary to other activities like language learning. According to Munday:

> The gearing of translation to teaching and language learning explains why academia considered it to be of secondary status. Translation exercises were regarded as a means of learning a new language or of reading a foreign language text until one had the linguistic ability to read the original. Study of a work in translation was originally frowned upon once the student had acquired the necessary skills to read the original. (2008[2001], 8)

Erich Prunč thinks that this subordination of translation and translators, despite their

essential role in cultural exchange, stems from the historical origins of translation studies

itself; until very recently, it focused principally on consolidating transparent translation

practices and obscuring the role of translators:

> Originating as a sub-discipline of contrastive linguistics, translation theory for many years chose to ignore the cognitive, social and cultural constraints under which translators operate. The notion of the ideal translator which was modelled on the systemic linguistic notion of the ideal speaker, and the logocentric construct of the decontextualized ﹁sacred original﹂ (Arrojo: 1997 a), the translation of which of course can only be its similarly decontextualized copy, forced translators into invisibility, reducing them to the status of transcoders and translation machines… (2007, 40)

It goes without saying that text-bound linguistic approaches, with their slippery notion of

equivalence, can never adequately account for translation, all the more so since they were

not much preoccupied with the role of translators. According to Berman (1989, 673),

even if linguistics provided the semiotic and stylistic analysis of translation, it tended to

15

reduce the latter to a simple interaction between languages, and its definition of the translation act has been so vague and abstract that it does not pay any tribute to such important aspects as the cultural and historical dimensions of translation.

Translation also attracted the attention of contrastive analysis. However, this approach, which appeared in the Americas after World War II, confined its analysis to the differences between two languages and did not pay due regard to translators. The most famous example in this respect is undoubtedly Jean-Paul Vinay and James Darbelnay's *Stylistique Comparée du Français et de l'Anglais (1958).* "Although useful, contrastive analysis does not however incorporate socio-cultural and pragmatic factors, or the role of translation as a communicative act". (Munday 2008 [2001], 8).

The comparative literature approach has likewise marked the history of translation studies. The ideological subjectivities of translators and their visibility in literary works owe much to contemporary literary theorists applying literary and cultural theories to translation. Nonetheless, conceiving translation as a complex socially interactive act involving the translator as an important agent was not always systematically explored. Many comparative literature programs have routinely ignored the presence of the translator altogether when analyzing and critiquing works of multiple linguistic and cultural origins. Bypassing the quintessential role of the translator, they have frequently tended to deal with translations as if they were originals:

> Some comparative work, especially that which takes
> place in the monolingual comparative-literature
> classroom, is handled as if a given text is in fact its
> named author's work. This, plus the comparatist's
> general focus on similarity, can elide and render

invisible the very translation that makes the texts accessible for study˝. (Coldiron 2000, 302).

If the first translation studies approaches mainly focused on evaluating translation texts, the late seventies of the last century saw the rise of some essential descriptive theories such as the polysystem theory. Combining comparative literature with Russian formalism, the work of the Manipulation School[11] endeavoured to account not only for translation theory but for culture as a whole, in terms of the concept of 'polysystem'. Developed by Itamar Even-Zohar, it refers to the interlaced hierarchical systems existing in society and ˋ attempts to explain the function of all kinds of writing within a given culture-from the central canonical texts to the most marginal non-canonical texts˝ (Gentzler 1993, 114). Conceived to account for the function of translated literature in the target-culture, the polysystem theory represented a decisive disruption from the hitherto equivalence-based linguistic approaches to translation. Nevertheless, even while bringing an important conceptual contribution to translation studies through the notion of polysystem, it neglects the role of agents and convicts translators to invisibility (to use the term dear to Lawrence Venuti). Even-Zohar's notion of primary and secondary forms of literature[12] and the idea that genres, whether original or in translation, compete to move from the periphery to the centre of the polysystem were likewise critiqued.  Further elaborating on the role of agents, Prunč (2007, 41) argues that Toury's concept of norms

---

[11] Mary Snell-Hornby states that because much of it was unpublished or mainly written in Dutch, the work of the Polysystem School, which was going on since the mid-1970s, remained largely unavailable. According to her, it was only after the publication of Theo Herman's volume of essays *The Manipulation of Literature* that academia became familiar with the work of this group of scholars (Even-Zohar, Lambert, Toury), later to be known as the Manipulation School. (2006,48)

[12] According to Even-Zohar ˋ systems maintain hierarchical relations, which means some maintain a more central position than others, or that some are primary while others are secondary˝ (1978a, 16). Genres such as popular and children's literature are of secondary rank and have, therefore, a peripheral position within the literary polysystem.

was conceived in the wrong direction because they represent a constraint on the freedom of the translator rather than a positive environment where he can play his inherent role as a socially interacting being. Likewise, he notes, Even-Zohar's literary systems turn a blind eye to agents as constructers of social conventions (2007, 41). From a sociological perspective, and drawing on the theoretical concepts of the French anthropologist and sociologist Bruno Latour, Hélène Buzelin believes that the sociological approach is partly indebted to the polysystem theory. She sees no fundamental mismatch between the conceptual work of the two trends and maintains that, with its focus on the process of producing translation, Bruno Latour's model would complement the thinking of the Polysystemic School which is more reception-oriented. (2007, 135) To the contrary, Jean-Marc Gouanvic[13] (2007, 30), who has applied Bourdieu's concepts in exploring the quintessential role of agents in translation, disapproves of the polysystemic approach insofar as it presumes the neutrality of the translation scholar situated above the objects he or she is analyzing and obscures the social role of the translator conceived as no more than a conveyor of external constraints.

Acutely aware of the conceptual limits of the polysystemic model, the recent developments in translation studies point to a focus that is sociological in nature. Drawing mainly on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Bruno Latour's actor-network theory[14], and Niklas Luhmann's system model, they have opened a new emerging and developing

---

[13] The view of translation as a social practice is central to the work of Jean-Marc Gouanvic, particularly the notions of habitus and field.

[14] For an application of Bruno Latour's model to translation, see Hélène Buzelin (2007),¨Translation in the Making″ in Wolf Michaela ed. *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company. pp. 135-169

trend known as the sociology of translation which underscores the socio-cultural aspects of translation and systematically highlights the role of translators and other translation agents and sociological methodologies.

## 2.3 The conjunction of sociology and translation

At first glance, sociology and translation studies may seem to have nothing in common, but they are now deeply intertwined in forging out a new research methodology, i.e. the sociology of translation. Constituting a hybrid of sociology and translation studies, this relatively new paradigm employs theoretical and empirical tools not used systematically before in reading and appraising translation. Significantly shifting emphasis to agents of translation including translators, it constitutes a decisive move from the text-linguistics and literary approaches to translation that have long focused on the sole product of translation, neglecting that both production-end and reception-end practices are the offspring of complex interactions in social space. The Western tradition had long reduced translation practice to purely an inter-textual question that involves an original and its translation as a derivative of the original:

> Transcending a merely inter-textual problematic that is centered on the relation between an original and its translation, leads to specifically sociological questions about the stakes and functions of translations, their agencies and agents, the space where they are situated and the constraints, both political and economic that circumscribe them (Heilbron & Sapiro 2007, 94)

However, that said, even while not always sharing the same research perspective as previous approaches in translation studies, the sociology of translation is not necessarily

at odds with its predecessors. In fact, the very nature of translation as an activity situated on the borderline of disciplines (Wolf, 2007) also implies that frontiers of other fields of knowledge are so 'fuzzy' for translation studies that it can transgress their unestablished bounds without prior notice. This also logically implies that it can give voice to more than one perspective at a time without running a serious risk of contradiction. We all tend to see translation studies as an interdisciplinary discipline. But what is interdisciplinarity if not a happy juncture of seemingly opposing disciplines and allegedly irreconcilable paradigms? If translation studies is interdisciplinary, even more so is the sociology of translation which finds its essential premise in the complex context of society at large. In this respect, Michaela Wolf highlights the socio-cultural factors of translation and calls attention to the role of the translator which she identifies as a 'constructing and constructed subject in society':

> The process of translation seems, to different degrees, to be conditioned by two levels. The cultural and the social. The first level, a structural one, encompasses influential factors such as power, dominance, national interest, religion or economics. The second level concerns the agents involved in the translation process, who continuously internalize the aforementioned structure and act in correspondence with their culturally connoted value systems and ideologies (2007, p.4)

In light of this conception, we should be able to explain the personal and professional behaviour of translators and other agents of translation, and to understand as well the social implications of translation. It is only in this way that we can gain adequate insight into translation phenomena.

To account for translation, we obviously need to do much more than analyze the translation process as such, and avoid confining the study of discourse exclusively to pragmatic concepts. As pointed out by Gouanvic:

> Les approches axées sur le processus portent beaucoup moins sur la dimension historique et beaucoup plus sur les aspects synchroniques de la traduction, alors que les études orientées vers les produits cherchent à reconstruire la logique historique qui a présidé à son émergence. L'étude de la traduction en tant que produit est axée -c'est là son horizon- vers la connaissance historique d'un segment culturel d'un espace donné à un moment donné de son histoire et s'efforce de positionner la traduction comme l'un des éléments de cet espace à ce moment là. (Gouanvic 2007, 13-14.)

According to Gouanvic, the study of translation should not be limited to a dogmatic or practical level that has solely to do with the process of translation but should also take into account the external factors that are specific to its time and venue. Since any work of art would bear the prints of the conditions that led to its emergence, an adequate account for translation logically needs to go far beyond the textual to grasp what is historical and cultural in a certain time and place. It should be clarified though that the sociological approach to translation is not completely at odds with some complementary text-centred approaches to translation which have held sway in the last decades.

In sum, it stands to reason that with such broad aims and scope, the sociology of translation would devote itself to a more lengthy study of social aspects of translation. From this perspective, exploring the habitus of the original author Alaa al-Aswany and his two translators Gilles Gauthier and Humphrey Davies as socially-versed agents should constitute one of the focal points of the research.

## CHAPTER THREE: HABITUS

In his essay ¨The death of the author″, Roland Barthes condemned biographical criticism, reiterating that the author's private life should not come to bear upon the interpretation of his work. Barthes's writing on the death of the author, which was neither logically developed nor completely worked out, remained at the centre of controversy and elicited a number of reactions from writers who demonstrated how it was untenable. My concern here, therefore, is not to respond to the death of the author as a concept, which would go far beyond the scope and aim of this work. Rather, the perspective we are am adopting here is that, in contrast with Barthes' assumption, the biographical data of an author/translator can be put to productive use within the scope of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus. By bringing to the fore the relevant aspects of an author/translator's life that bear upon his work, translation scholars can benefit from the unprecedented explanatory potential of Bourdieu's thought, in turn granting critics more profound insight into the work itself. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to restore a point of view that has been largely obscured by 'anti-biographical' criticism in translation studies; i.e. one which came to conceive of the translator as no more than a conduit, believing that translation analysis should take language rather than writers as a starting point for its enquiry. It sets out to offer a critical assessment that aims to rediscover and underscore a lost dimension of translation research, one that has been long imprisoning itself within the linguistic confines of a purely intertextual question, i.e. one that deals with an original and a derivative of the original. In what follows, then, we will start from the assumption that translation criticism becomes more engaging with the inclusion of the name(s) and biography(ies) of an author/translator, and that any oeuvre lends itself well to such a

critical reading. For my purposes here, we are using the expression 'translation criticism' after the late Antoine Berman, who fervently fought for the creation of translation criticism as an independent discipline. Deploring the overriding orientation towards negative evaluation of translations which has so far marked- and marred-evaluations of translations, Berman identifies this negativity as one of the main reasons preventing the creation of translation criticism as a discipline. Besides analysing the habitus of the author and translators (chapter three), looking into critical readings of a work of literature is also important for understanding its meaning and social implications. Translation criticism, whether positive or negative, not only increases a translation's 'visibility' but also often shapes its reception, as we shall see later in this thesis. Right now, let us take a brief excursion into the theoretical terrain of Bourdieu's notion of habitus and apply it to the three agents.

### 3.1 Bourdieu's concept of habitus

In his contribution to *Bourdieu: key concepts,* Karl Maton invests considerable time and effort into going through Bourdieu's writings and giving us a quintessential definition of Bourdieu's concept of habitus. He briefly explains how it serves as both ̏a structuring and structured structure ̋; i.e.

> …a property of social agents (whether individuals, groups or institutions) that comprises a ''structured and structuring structure'' (1994:170). It is structured by one's past and present circumstances, such as family upbringing and educational experience. It is ''structuring'' in that one's habitus helps to shape one's present and future practices. It is a ''structure'' in that it is systematically ordered rather than random and unpatterned. This ''structure'' comprises a system of dispositions which generate perceptions, appreciations and practices (2008, 51)

Habitus, then, can be envisioned as a device that shapes our present and future actions and our dispositions, after being shaped itself by our past. It is this accumulation of our past and present experiences that combine to determine our future orientations.

### 3.2 Alaa al-Aswany's Habitus

In his article ˵Social space and symbolic power˶ Bourdieu (1989) lays out some of the elements that would constitute his vision of habitus, informing us that ˵…the affinities of habitus experienced as sympathy or antipathy, are at the base of all forms of cooptation, friendship, love affairs, marriages, associations and so on…˶ These affinities are clearly of importance and relevance to the work of al-Aswany, whose images and associations are culled from the health care service environment. In an interview published in the Canadian newspaper *Globe & Mail* on June 17, 2008, he told Mark Mackinnon that ˵the disease afflicting the Arab world is dictatorship. There are many symptoms and complications… to cure the symptoms you must cure the disease˶. Dentist by profession, he told the same newspaper that he sees the government of his country as a tooth decayed beyond repair and that there exists no other solution but to yank it out in order to leave the place for a new healthy tooth to grow. He also thinks that ˵both medicine and literature are dealing with the same issue: the human being˶, as he expressed in the same interview. Needless to say, it is not easy to imagine a person not working in the health care domain giving these images and making these analogies and associations.

The way he creates his characters and develops the themes covered in his novels clearly has links to his left-wing background and to the role he thinks literature should play in society. In another interview (2008) with the *Globe & Mail* newspaper al-Awsany said

'there are two very important struggles taking place in Egypt now. One is the struggle to set up a real democracy. The other combat lies in the struggle between the Egyptian version of Islam-which is very tolerant-and Wahhabism." Poverty, social injustice, corruption and terrorism which are according to him symptoms of these incurable diseases afflicting Arab society are actually the main themes addressed in his debut novel *Imarat Ya'qoubian*. This position taken by Alaa al-Aswany may be understood in light of Bourdieu's definition of habitus, as provided to us in the following passage:

> Habitus as a system of dispositions to be and to do is a potentiality, a desire to be which, in a certain way, seeks to create the conditions of its fulfilments, and therefore to create the conditions most favourable to what it is (…) guided by one's sympathies and antipathies, affections and aversions, tastes and dislikes, one makes for oneself an environment in which one feels ''at home'' and in which one can achieve that fulfilment of one's desire to be which one identifies with happiness. And we do indeed observe (in the form of significant statistical relationships) a striking agreement between the characteristics of agents' dispositions (and social positions) and those at the objects with which they surround themselves - houses, furniture, household equipment etc.- or of the people with whom they most durably associate - spouses, friends and connections (2000, 150).

The author's sympathies and antipathies as a left-wing Egyptian intellectual and politician also influenced his writings in the international press and shaped the way he used his symbolic capital. While his novel *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* (2002) was not always cordially welcomed in Egypt, where some accused him of 'tarnishing the country's image abroad', the latter received an unprecedented welcome in other parts of the world. Vividly depicting society's illnesses and bravely dealing with taboo subjects, the novel which symbolizes, with its ten storeys, the many layers of modern Egyptian society was

widely mediatised and praised in the Western hemisphere. It has since been translated into more than twenty languages, an outward sign of esteem that not even the Arabic Nobel Prize laureate Najīb Mahfūz apparently seemed to deserve. The phenomenal success achieved by his novel and his subsequent rise to fame granted Alaa al-Aswany a kind of recognition (symbolic capital in Bourdieu's sense) that gave him the 'social authority' to act in the name of his people and even to 'impose' his own vision of the world. We recall that symbolic capital according to Bourdieu is linked to power and authority:

> Symbolic power has to be based on the possession of symbolic capital. The power to impose upon other minds a vision, old or new, of social division, depends on the social authority acquired in previous struggles. Symbolic capital is a credit; it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition. (1989, 23)

Indeed, the recognition al-Aswany acquired as a famous Arab liberal figure would allow him to start publishing some articles in the Anglophone press and to impose his own perceptions and beliefs. In three of the articles published in the Anglophone press from 2008 to 2010 i.e., one in the *National Post* entitled ̎Switzerland's 'battle' of the minarets ̎ and the other two at *the Toronto Globe & Mail* newspaper entitled respectively ̎ Why Islamic extremists are obsessed with female bodies ̎ and ̎ Who killed the Egyptians on their feast day? ̎, Alaa al-Aswany frowns at 'extremist' practices in their countries and abroad and clearly positions himself as their intellectual adversary[15]. In the second article dealing with a strange incident that took place in an area of Somalia controlled by the

---

[15] We have chosen these articles because they are representative of the thoughts al-Aswany expressed in the Western press.

*Shabab*[16] movement, al-Aswany particularly ridiculed Islamists when he reported them slashing a woman for wearing a bra, and described them as seeing women ``as objects - of pleasure, temptation and sin - and using strictness against them as an easy form of religious struggle.″ Al-Aswany's attitude towards Islamists did not change after the Egyptian revolution. In his article ``Mubarak's cronies plundered Egyptians dreams″ published in *The Financial Times* on Feb. 2, 2012, he accused the military council of giving the majority of parliament seats to Islamists and of turning a blind eye to their illegal acts. He also considered Islamists a hindrance to real democracy, as reflected in his article ``The revolution's next step″, published in *Newsweek International* on Aug 29, 2011. Al-Aswany'a symbolic capital and social recognition as a prominent opposition figure and international novelist substantially rose after Feb. 11, 2011. A few weeks after the president stepped down, the author found himself confronting the Prime Minister Ahmed Shafik on a live ONTV channel show followed by millions from within and outside Egypt. Al-Aswany's criticism was so effective that the prime minister resigned the next morning.

Indeed, the author's little sympathy for his "adversaries" has an impact on the way he handles his characters. His open battle against the tyrannical political system and the rise of the intolerant version of Islam, as well as his sympathy for characters sharing his intellectual background, is unmistakably detectable in his narrative. He admitted these personal dispositions as such when he told the *Globe and Mail Toronto* newspaper in 2008: ``I find my novels in these two combats″.

---

[16] An Islamist group fighting against the Somali authorities and having control over some parts of southern Somalia.

Overtly fighting for these causes, al-Aswany subscribes to a Western-style novel that breaks with the classical Arabic model both in style and in content[17]. In so doing, he clearly provides us with a new narrative logic which finds no inspiration in the Qur'anic writings and other forms of Islamic literature. Smashing through every taboo he can find in his way, he seeks to establish a new discourse; one that can operate as an alternative to the traditional Islamic discourse adopted by the writers of the earlier generation. This trend is manifestly discernible right from the start of the novel which is marked by a bold defiance of established precepts in this part of the world. In contrast to his later novel *Chicago* (2007) which starts with a 'justification' of the novel's title, *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* pushes back the chapter talking about the title until page 20 of the Arabic version. Keen on breaking the reader's "horizon of expectations"[18], the author starts with the libertine and seductive Zaki Bey El Dessouki. Depicting him as an Arab Don Juan, he tells the reader about his unceasing stream of scabrous jokes and his sexual adventures in the most explicit way. We are also informed that in response to the young men's questions about certain sexual matters, this sex expert "would explain to them in a voice audible to all, the most subtle sexual secrets and that he would, in some cases, go as far as to˝ask for a paper and a pen so he can draw clearly for them some curious positions that he himself tried in the days of his youth.˝ All this can be considered shocking in this part of the world, especially since the unexpected "sex talk" continued until page 20 of the original. This attitude of explicitly talking about sexual matters in public is characteristic, at least

---

[17] Al-Aswany's style has a certain 'raciness' and is therefore not as strong as Mahfūz's. On the other hand, al-Aswany is more audacious in smashing all kinds of taboos (Mahfūz also addressed various social ills and was nearly imprisoned for that).

[18] This term is widely used by a number of scholars after the German sociologist Nikolas Luhmann.

in the Arab world, of left-wing intellectuals who are adamant about breaking tacit norms that regulate subjects considered taboo in the Arabo-Islamic society.

From a sociological perspective, our analysis of Alaa al-Aswany' habitus offers numerous illustrations of specific ways the particulars of the personal and professional lives of an author can be put to productive use in literary expression. Since no human act, tendency or disposition can be understood in isolation of its social and cultural setting and its particular historical moment in time, making a logical link between the writer's life and his work gives us deeper insight into his work. Within the framework of his battle against his two major "enemies", al-Aswany depicts the government and all characters having an Islamic background in a negative light. In their attempt to portray Godliness, they tend to pepper their speech with the expression 'God willing' and to recite the first chapter of the Qur'an even when carrying out their unlawful acts. Hagg Azzam, for example, is an ex-shoe-polisher who uses religion and business to hide his past as a drug dealer. Reciting prayers unceasingly in order to give the impression of religious devotedness, he sees no harm in using his ill-obtained money to buy a seat in parliament, to crush his political adversary or to sexually abuse a poor woman. Even worse, after he becomes a member of parliament, Hagg Azzam starts appearing in the official media to defend decency and virtue and to urge the government to combat corruption."Verily there was nothing more wonderful than divine providence″, he says to himself after he buys his way into party politics and becomes the parliamentary representative of the very district where he started as a shoe-polisher some twenty years earlier. ″ When God is willing, nothing is impossible; ..Money makes short work of

problems and brings the distant goal within reach. One day he might reach the ministry, just as he had reached the assembly." (*The Yacoubian Building,* 124)

Al-Aswany similarly presents recruiter Sheikh Muhammad Shakir, Imam of Anas Ibn Malik mosque. He always addresses his students using the expression "beloved sons and daughters" but exploits their dismay of social injustice in order to use them as scapegoats to achieve political gains. The novel portrays Sheikh El-Samman, the other imam, as always pronouncing the whims of Hagg Azzam lawful, simply because he is open-handedly donating to him and generously supporting his dubious charitable causes. He goes so far as to urge Souad to abort, claiming that some trustworthy jurisprudential opinions delivered by the great scholars of religion affirm that termination of a pregnancy during the first two months is not an abortion. Upon this affirmation, Souad laughs sarcastically and replies "those must have been American sheikhs."

On the other hand, because of the author's left-wing background, the novel mostly portrays left-wing liberal characters as harmless; they are more sinned against than sinners themselves. Not echoing these characters' tense relation with the values of the conservative society they are living in, the novel assumes they are maltreated at the hands of this society. With his tender treatment of homosexuality and extramarital relationships, for example, al-Aswany is prone to blithe statements about some of these socially unacceptable practices, and conveys a sympathy that is rarely found in this part of the world. Zaki Bey El Dessouki, the elderly unmarried playboy, is a popular and upright, respected man. Despite his effeminate character, Hatim Rasheed is not only a 'talented

and enquiring individual' who cannot be blamed for his sexual orientation but also a 'conservative homosexual' that inspires respect, as conveyed by this passage:

> The people in the bar were drunk, shouting and singing loudly. All the same, as soon as Hatim entered, their racket diminished and they took to observing him with curiosity and certain awe. They knew that he was a *kudyana* (a passive homosexual), but a forbidding natural reserve prevented them from acting familiarly with him and even the most impudent and obscene of customers could do no other than treat him with respect … Hatim Rasheed is a conservative homosexual, if that is the right expression… with his smart clothes, svelte figure and fine French features, he would look like a scintillating movie star were it not for the wrinkles that his riotous life has left on his face… (*The Yacoubian Building*, 37-38)

Even if the 'conservative' Hagg Azzam and the 'liberal' Zaki Bey El Dessouki are both in their sixties, their attraction to the other sex is described in contradictory ways in the novel. In contrast with Souad, the veiled woman, who dislikes bodily contact between her and Hag Azzam, Bousayna, the unveiled girl, is enjoying her romance with Zaki Bey, even if she knows that he is a pleasure-seeker. She sees him as a rescuer and prefers him to her young former sweetheart Taha al-Jazli, who signed up for the Islamic movement.

Habitus also conditions and is conditioned by our ˝sympathies and antipathies, affections and aversions, tastes and dislikes˝, and therefore largely determines ˝people with whom we most durably associate˝ (as maintained by Bourdieu (2000, 150)). Habitus accounts not only for the link between an author and his work but also for any affinity between authors and translators or attraction of translation projects to translators. The well-known translator Denys Johnson-Davies, for example, explains this attraction in terms of

sympathy between the translator and the works he translates. Asked about his criteria for choosing works for translation, this translator explained that after he was guaranteed a living, his choice was mainly motivated by his own personal likes:˝ Having translated millions of words to make a living, I now indulge myself by translating only those things with which I feel in sympathy. One gives a lot of oneself when translating - not only time- and I am deeply unwilling to do this with a writer with whose writings I cannot communicate emotionally˝ (Johnson-Davies & Ghazoul 1983, 83).

These sympathies and antipathies find similar instances of resonance in the case of the French and English language translators of al-Aswany's *Imarat Ya'qoubian*. Gilles Gauthier's enjoyment of *Imarat Ya'qoubian*, which finds its explanation in his deeply rooted self, i.e. his habitus, clearly manifests translator-author sympathy. Humphrey Davies' position as a professional translator fulfilling a commission at the request of the American University in Cairo Press, affects the way he would render the novel into English, as we shall clarify in the following chapter.

### 3.3 HABITUS OF THE TWO TRANSLATORS

#### 3.3.1 Translator-Friendly Research

In his biography prefaced by the Nobel Prize laureate Najīb Mahfūz, Denys Johnson-Davies[19], a prominent British English-language translator of modern Arabic writing, says that some unusual circumstances set him on the path to studying Arabic and becoming a

---

[19] At a time when Arabic was still a little-studied language and its literature completely unknown and/or ignored by the West, translation was the pioneering work of a few tireless enthusiasts like Denys Johnson-Davies. His unprecedented effort in translating Arabic works have carved for him a special niche as one of the introducers of Arabic fiction to the World. Relentlessly translating from this language, his translations - which have now become 'classics'- are still read despite the emergence of later versions.

literary translator. It is hardly consoling to note that despite his long and distinguished career very little work has been done on this pioneer who translated Najīb Mahfūz, Mahmoud Darwish, Tawfiq al-Hakim, Tayyeb Salih and other great twentieth century Arab writers. Amazingly enough this has been the case not only for Denys Johnson-Dav ies but for almost all translators of Arabic.[20] According to the Finnish scholar Outi Palopski, this alarming shortage of information about translators is attributable to the nature of their work, but also reflective of how they conceive their role:

> There is still relatively little work done on the actual working circumstances of translators. The daily routines and day-to-day procedures of translators remain largely hidden, partly to their 'invisible' nature: their work is carried out alone, and not infrequently with the explicit understanding that translators are to remain in the shadows.˝ (2009, 192)

Even while it is true that translators tend not to profusely write or talk about their activity, this silence is compounded by the fact that they ''remain in the shadows'' mostly due to a resolute indifference by the public at large. Whereas the autobiography of Johnson-Davies[21] allows us at least a glimpse into certain aspects of his personal and professional lives, for Humphrey Davies and Gilles Gauthier there is little more than the occasional interview, translator prefaces and notes. The literature on the lives and works of these two translators is still largely a blank page, which makes them an intriguing object of

---

[20] There are certainly some exceptions to this general lack of information about translators and their work. The two Finnish translators Samuli Suomalainen (1850-1907) and Juhani Konkka (1904-1970) are a case in point. According to Outi Palopski (2009), they have ˝ meticulously kept notes or made copies of their correspondence, specifying the kinds of tasks they are involved in, their suggestions to the publishers, and their reactions to publishers' requests, literary developments and the like˝. This data constitutes an invaluable aid for understanding these translators' attitudes and mindset.

[21] In his autobiography *Memories in Translation: a Life Between the Lines of Arabic Literature,* published with the American University in Cairo Press in 2006, Denys Johnson-Davies not only recounts the facts and particulars of his private life but also shares insights and memories of a life-long experience at the service of Arabic literature.

study. Additionally, if we hope to explore and understand the translator habitus more completely, we must investigate the little-known details of their lives and work. We do know, for example, that it is a *coup-de-foudre* for Alaa al-Alswany's *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* that first drew the former French ambassador Gilles Gauthier to the activity of translation, but we have no idea what set of circumstances really put Humphrey Davies on the path of this profession. Clearly, this situation of strikingly little material about translators and their work presents the translation scholar with enormous difficulties, but likewise it is this scarcity of information that can also account for the pleasure of research.

In one sense, we could argue that this apparent absence of translators from the cultural scene does represent a certain ˝death of the translator.˝ Although the concept of the ˝death of the translator˝ is not fully comparable to the ˝death of the author˝ proposed by Roland Barthes, it can usefully suggest a parallel when we speak of the disappearance of the rewriter of the author, i.e. the translator, omitted purposefully from the cultural scene and the academic discourse and scholarship that should be discussing their works and their implications. It is in reaction to the ''death of the translator'', that we are now witnessing a more sustained interest in the role of the translator, as evidenced by the more translator-friendly research gaining ground in translation studies. Focusing on translators rather than solely on texts, this research trend seeks to devise practical explanations for the problems related to traditional types of enquiry that favour only one side of the epistemological questions necessary for understanding translation as a social act.

### 3.3.2 TranslatOR studies

Noting the growing interest in research questions that explicitly place translators at the core of research models, Andrew Chesterman, has suggested that this translator-related research be considered as a ˵legitimate branch˶ of translation studies, and he proposes incorporating this most recent disciplinary tendency as a subfield in our discipline. Like Gouanvic, Chesterman affirms that translators always imprint their personalities on their translations. By extension, translators' lives and dispositions are necessarily intertwined with the textual, thus ultimately engaging the reader as well. While Chesterman seems to imply prioritizing the translators over text, Bourdieu would suggest that it is necessary to scrutinize both. Clearly however, the readjusted focus from text to translator has implications. According to Chesterman ˵in translator studies, texts are secondary, the translators themselves are primary. Priority leads to quite different kinds of research questions.˶ (2009, 15). From the same perspective placing the translator centre-stage, Jean-Marc Gouanvic provides us with another relevant translator-friendly conceptual tool; notably the primary habitus and the specific habitus of the translator.

### 3.3.3 Primary habitus and specific habitus of the translator

The primary habitus and the specific habitus of the translator both are pragmatic notions derived from Pierre Bourdieu's general habitus which Gouanvic has used to analyse the attitudes and dispositions of the French translators who had imported the realistic novel, the detective novel and science fiction from Anglo-American literature into French. According to Gouanvic, each of the translators has a specific habitus that is conditioning and is conditioned by his own social trajectory and each of them has a different position (symbolic capital) in the French literary field. In the context of Gouanvic's research,

Coindreau's habitus as a university associate professor makes him appreciate serious literature; Duhamel has a rather jubilatory concept of literature that is clearly detectable in his translations-adaptations of the American detective novel; while Boris Vian is a gifted literary talent. (Gouanvic 2007)

Regarding the translator's specific habitus, there are several important points that Gouanvic puts forth. Of particular interest is the fact that in contrast to popular belief, learning a foreign language as a prerequisite for success in the translation field cannot alone make a successful translator. Rather, the task of translating has to do with a specific habitus that goes beyond the mere fact of language proficiency. Gouanvic also reminds us that numerous language teachers fail miserably when they try their hand at translation. This seems to be the case, for example, for the translator Gilles Gauthier. He holds a BA in the Spanish language which he taught in Morocco and Algeria; nonetheless, he never translated from or into Spanish. He would not necessarily be endowed with the specific habitus for translating Spanish. According to Gouanvic:

> L'habitus du traducteur possède la particularité […] de résulter de la convergence de deux cultures. Formé la plupart du temps à l'école avec l'apprentissage d'une seconde langue, l'*habitus* primaire ou originaire est une condition de l'acquisition de la pratique de la traduction, mais il ne fait pas le traducteur. L'habitus spécifique du traducteur se construit dans la rencontre de deux cultures; la culture indigène […] et la culture étrangère, que le traducteur a acquise la plupart du temps par un contacte avec l'étranger ou par immersion. (Gouanvic 2007, 186)

If we have a look at the primary habitus as a prior condition for becoming a successful translator, we find that both Davies and Gauthier satisfy this requirement of having learnt

the source language. Humphrey Davies studied Arabic at Cambridge and at the American University's Centre for Arabic Studies, while Gilles Gauthier obtained the Higher Diploma of Classical Arabic at the French National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO). Both translators were significantly exposed to the Arabic culture as a determinant factor of their specific habitus. They therefore comply with the condition of contact between the two cultures (the translator's culture and the indigenous culture, i.e. the culture in which the translators are immersed) and cultural immersion, as proposed by Gouanvic. Davies has lived throughout the Arab world since 1979. After working for several non-governmental organizations in several Arab countries such as Sudan, Tunisia and Palestine, he joined the publishing industry in the Gulf Sates. He left the Arab region only to complete a doctorate at the University of California Berkeley in Near Eastern Studies and he is currently based in Cairo where he has been translating Arabic literature for more than a decade now. Gauthier is also very familiar with the Arab world. He lived between 1966 and 1982 in Morocco and Algeria where he taught Spanish. He also lived in Egypt where he was appointed French Consul in Alexandria and in Yemen where he acted as France's ambassador until 2009.

### 3.3.4 Professional or activist translator

To shed light on the translator's attitude, Chesterman also suggests in his above-mentioned (2007) article that translation studies should incorporate a word which is very close in meaning to Bourdieu's habitus. He argues that in the same way that the word *skopos* is now commonly used to refer to ″the intended effect of a translation″, a similar term, *telos,* may be appropriately used ″to denote the personal motivation of translators″

and ˝the reasons why they work in this field in general, and also the reasons why they translate a given text.˝

Accordingly, we can say that Humphrey Davies' habitus, or his *telos* if we are to adopt Cherterman's terminology, as a professional translator is quite different from Gauthier's habitus as a voluntary activist translator. They have different reasons for coming to the activity of translation and they are translating this particular text for different purposes. This fact is clearly detectable in the way each of them renders the Arabic into the target language. These purposes could also be the subject of research questions, as noted by Chesterman:

> voluntary translators in particular, such as activist translators, may have *teloi* that are especially interesting. Sociological work on the *teloi* of translators (and of course interpreters) might make worthwhile contributions to a better understanding of their attitudes and personal goals and ethics and how they are realized in what and how they translate. (2009, 17)

It is not difficult to see that any translator living from his work in the Arab World would have enormous difficulty when attempting to combine work and pleasure. In a region where few people read for pleasure, it is hard for any literary translator to trespass the mutual antagonism of taste and business.[22] He has to invest himself either in the work for ˝art˝ or for ˝money˝ to quote the famous opposition declared by Flaubert. This is one reason why a professional translator might well be pragmatic and mathematical in his relationship to his translation assignments, and why his work can be significantly devoid of any emotional dimensions, thus not carrying conviction uniformly throughout the text.

---

[22] The 2009 annual report of the United Nations' Development Program estimated the illiteracy rate at more than 30 % of the population in the majority of Arab countries.

When contemplating translation as a source of livelihood, Davies had occasion to suitably rejoice, during a speech made at the American University in Cairo's Centre for Translation Studies, at the fact that translation of Arabic fiction had increased not only as an immediate result of 9-11 events but also because of more extensive international communication. Publishers are an important agent in this international communication; they are the vehicle for commissioning, publishing and disseminating translated works. Davies informs us in one of his interviews (2010) that within the framework of its mission to promote Arabic literature in translation, the American University in Cairo assigned him the task of rendering *Imarat Ya'qubian* into English. We also know that Davies' assignments for the American University in Cairo Press include works as diverse and well-known as Nagib Mahfūz's *Thebes at War*, Ahmed Alaidy's *Being Abbes al-Abd*, Khaled al-Berry's *Life is More Beautiful Than Paradise* and the Algerian woman writer Ahlam Mostaghanemi's *Chaos of the Senses*. In additions to these works, the American University in Cairo Press (AUCP) has also made the pioneering effort of introducing Arabic fiction to the world at large. Having celebrated its 52nd anniversary this year, this non-profit publication house of the AUC is still ˋ the leading English-language publishing house in the Middle East which licenses foreign editions of Arab writers in forty languages, including the works of the late Egyptian Nobel laureate Nagib Mahfūz, and the international bestsellers of Alaa al-Aswany.˝ (Büchler & Guthrie 2011)

While the English translation of *'Imarat Ya'qubian* was rooted in its commission by the American University in Cairo Press, the French translation emerged under different circumstances. Gilles Gauthier did not translate it for a living. In contrast to Humphrey Davies, this former French ambassador voluntarily chose the book to translate for

personal reasons. Because he also used translation to militate for his doxa and to convey his vision of the world as we shall see later in this chapter, we can aptly qualify him as a voluntary[23] and activist translator. After a long career in the diplomatic corps, Gauthier was so fascinated by the novel when he first read it in Arabic that he started translating it into French on his own initiative. If we agree with the French scholar Albert Bensoussan when he says that translation is ‶un acte d'amour″ (Bensoussan 1990, 601), we can here accordingly evoke empathy with the author and the content of the novel, and rightfully say that Gilles Gauthier translated the novel because he 'fell in love with it'. He felt the need to share the pleasure of his reading-experience with the French-speaking readership. Even while not a professional translator by training, Gilles Gauthier has remarkably retained the position of Alaa al-Aswany's exclusive translator into French up to this date. He has translated '*Imarat Ya'qoubian*, *Chicago* and *Niran Sadika* (*Friendly Fire)* (the French title was changed into *J'aurais voulu être Egyptien*) which are the totality of the author's published novels.[24] In his interview published on the French website Culture & Cie under the title *L'Egypte Moderne Selon Gilles Gauthier de Yacoubian à Chicago*, Gauthier revealed to the interviewer Samira Sabour that his relationship with Alaa al-Aswany started with a *coup-de-foudre* for his best-seller *The Yacoubian Building* which he had started translating *de son proper chef* without even knowing whether or not it would be published. When he signed the contract with the publisher, he had already done much of the work. ‶We immediately sympathized″, he went on to say about his first

---

[23] While 'voluntary' usually refers to unpaid work, we are using it here to convey the meaning that Gauthier did the translation on his own initiative and not at the request of a commissioner as is the case for Davies. It is worth mentioning that he started translating the novel even before getting in touch with the author or the publisher.

[24] Al-Aswany published another book - *On the State of Egypt* - but it is not a novel. This collection of the newspaper columns he wrote before the revolution was translated by Jonathan Wright and published by AUCP in 2011 (after the revolution).

meeting with the author.˝ Coming from a francophone family, he was able to read my translation, which he so liked that he assigned me exclusive rights for translating *Chicago*, the novel he was writing˝ (accessed on November 30, 2010). This sympathy between Alaa al-Aswany and Gilles Gauthier may be understood in light of the definition of habitus by Bourdieu provided earlier. Bourdieu maintains that habitus conditions and is conditioned by our ˋsympathies and antipathies, affections and aversions, tastes and dislikes˝ and that it largely determines ˋpeople with whom we most durably associate - spouses, friends and connections˝ (2000, 150). This disposition may also be explained by what Bourdieu calls, as per Goffman, 'the sense of one's place':

> Social space is so constructed that agents who occupy similar or neighbouring positions are placed in similar conditions and subjected to similar conditionings, and therefore have every chance of having similar positions and interests, and thus of producing practices that are themselves similar… add to this that this sense of one's place, and the affinities of habitus experienced as sympathy or antipathy, are at the basis of all forms of cooptation, friendship, love affairs, marriages, associations and so on, thus of all the relationships that are lasting and sanctioned by the law. (1989, 17)

According to Bourdieu then, people occupying similar or neighbouring positions in social space are much more likely to sympathise and to build lasting and durable associations than those occupying very distant positions. This 'sympathy' between the author and the translator as social agents finds its explanation in their shared values and apprehensions. Here we can argue that Alaa al-Aswany's habitus meets with Gauthier's as proponents for civil liberties and promoters of independent and egalitarian thought.[25]

---

[25] This is consistent with Gauthier's clear attitude with regard to Arab revolutions. Considered as an Arab world specialist since his retirement in 2009, Gauthier has given a number of interviews and taken part in many Radio and TV programs in the aftermath of recent upheavals in the region. On March 22, 2011, for

### 3.3.5 Paratextual Agency

Other aspects of Davies and Gauthier's work also strike us as highly relevant for explaining the differences in their respective habituses. The use of footnotes and other paratextual elements is a case in point. In her article "Limits of freedom, agency choice and constraints in the work of the translator", Outi Paloposki [26] provides us with a useful distinction between textual, paratextual and extratextual agency.

> Textual agency would refer to the translator's voice in the text, to her/his footprints, so to speak, be they deliberate manipulations, stylistic preferences or habits (Baker 2000; Gullin 2002; Pekkanen 2007) or functionalist-oriented adaptation or anything in between. Paratextual agency consists of the translator's role in inserting and adding notes and prefaces, and extratextual agency of the selection of books to be translated, the use of different editions and intermediary translations, and to the role of translators in ''speaking out'', publicizing their translations, explaining their methods and strategies, and the like. (2009, 191)

Also according to Paloposki, the translator's textual, paratextual and extratextual agency in the work can be understood in terms of the power relations governing the different players involved in the 'translation game' (in Bourdieu's sense). It is not difficult to notice that Davies has much less textual or paratextual power over his translation than Gauthier who remains omnipresent throughout the book. Neither does Davies use footnotes, nor does he mingle in any way with the content of the novel. Apart from his neutral cast of characters, his brief translator's note and his very neutral end glossary, his

---

example, he criticized the Yemeni regime in an interview with the French newspaper *Lacroix* maintaining that the pacific revolution is a unifying factor for Yemen. By the same token, Gauthier has also since 2010 been president of the Association Des Amis de La Haute-Egypte which, among other things, finances projects that promote schooling of girls in remote areas of Egypt and works towards improving conditions for women in the country.

[26] Inspired by Kaisa Koskinen's (2000, 99) categorization of textual paratextual and extratextual visibility in her treatment of translation ethics.

footprints in the work are faint and his voice much more difficult to discern. As a hired professional, he has to be practical and to conform to certain standards maintained by the publisher. The publishing industry has its own constraints as we shall see in the following chapter. Translators have to comply with the rules of the game if they want to survive. ˮPublishers by and large hate footnoting novels. Publishers, that is to say, of English-language novels,ˮ he told Lynx Qualey in his interview published on December 7, 2009. Davies provides additional valuable information for translation scholars seeking to understand translator habitus. He notes in the same interview that the translator has a range of other different strategies and tactics, and that footnotes and most glossaries are not important because they areˮ an interruption to the reader's concentration without sufficient reward.ˮ This remark logically explains why his translation is very straightforward and economic in style.

While Davies does not use any footnotes or endnotes, Gauthier's French version is footnoted to the hilt. The content of these footnotes shows this translator's familiarity with Egyptian society. However, if we go back to Chesterman's quote regarding the *telos* of the translator and the reasons why a translator chooses to work in a certain field and to translate a particular text, we may say that this activist translator also finds in the text fertile ground for militating in favour of his doxa and for conveying his worldview as supporter of egalitarian thought. Amazingly enough, Gauthier'sˮ paratextual powerˮ pushed him to sometimes go as far as to contradict the author Alaa al-Aswany himself, as he did in his footnote on page 215. While the author says that Abdel Nasser ˮa d'abord chassé les juifs puis les autres étrangers ont eu peur pour eux-mêmes et sont partisˮ, Gauthier inserts a footnote on the same sentence to correct him, saying: ˮ après la

nationalisation du canal Suez et l'attaque conjugée de la France de la Grande Bretagne et d'Israël contre l'Egypte, les ressortissants français et anglais ont été expulsés en même temps qu'un grand nombre de juifs égyptiens." Based on this example, the way Gauthier intervenes in the text seems to be to add supplementary information in order to keep with the French public and official attitude with regard to Abdel Nasser and the Suez Canal crisis. This may be explained by his habitus as a former French official who would contradict his country's position in this conflict. According to Owen (1957), the majority of opinion pools and newspapers in France at that time showed that the majority of French population was sharing the government's view that Abdel Nasser not only prevented France from achieving its legitimate goals in the region, but was also a dictator who would do any bold and cruel act at any time.

We also find this point relevant to support our argument about Davies' habitus as a non-militant translator who does not intervene in any manner with the events of the novel and who almost mechanically deals with this translation as he would do with any other translation task. Even if his country was involved in the war, he neither changed nor commented on this information, confirming that his allegiance was to the commissioner of the translation rather than to his native country or to his personal views. Gauthier, on the contrary, comments on the political history of Egypt on a number of occasions, taking a stance vis-à-vis the country's politics. In a footnote on page 108, for instance, he says: "après leur prise de pouvoir, les officiers libres instaurèrent le système du parti unique. Celui-ci évolua par la suite vers un multipluralisme de façade, laissant l'héritier du parti unique au centre du dispositif." Criticising the Egyptian regime's false pretence of political multi-pluralism, here he is consciously or unconsciously presenting the

Western model of democracy as a goal to emulate. One would not of course expect a man like Humphrey Davies to take such a risky step. This is not only because he is a non-militant translator who does not bother himself much with the Egyptian dirty politics; it is also because living abroad as a 'normal' citizen and sharing the daily life of Egyptians has more than likely changed his worldview. In contrast to Gauthier who willingly or unwillingly hid behind diplomatic immunity when he lived in this part of the world, Davies knows well that making such comments in a dictatorship like Egypt may make his stay in Cairo end on a bitter note. He is aware that many foreigners engaging in local politics ended up in prison for the least kind of false charge or saw their residency revoked for what was labelled as " interference in the country's internal affairs." [27] It is likewise worthy of notice here that Gauthier did not react to whatever facts he did not agree with in the novel by changing or omitting them altogether but rather reacted to them in a translator's footnote. If changing the original or omitting some of its elements may go unnoticed especially to the monolingual readership, commenting on the text serves the interest of a translator like Gauthier. It saves him from ''invisibility'' to use the terminology of Venuti.

While excessive footnoting can be considered as a somewhat negative practice, a lack of footnotes can also be detrimental to a novel, and renders the intended meaning inaccessible to the target reader. This is especially the case when readers are unfamiliar with current events, diverse political views, or are conditioned by media (source of news)

---

[27] Obviously this applied to Egypt prior to February 11, 2011. It is true that the country is still in the febrile months just following the revolution, but the situation has indeed changed for the better. As a professional translator Humphrey Davies thinks that he really needs to stay in Cairo because of its importance as a hub of Arab cultural activity. In Cairo he can have the privilege of easily getting in touch with Arab authors he is translating whenever he needs their insight about any aspect of their works that remains obscure to him.

in accordance with traditional ideologies. The same goes for culture. Translators find themselves trying to explain to readers on a level of text that is also ultimately pedagogical in nature. While Gauthier used a footnote to explain that a rabbit means a million Egyptian pounds in slang language, Davies did not care to point it out and did not give any reference. This attitude adopted by Davies may certainly be explained by the time he was allotted for every translation project. Needless to say, translators have to abide by the time limits determined by the commissioners of translations and they usually sign binding contracts in this respect. We do not know how long Davies had to complete *The Yacoubian Building*; however, he said in one of his interviews that he translated Ilyas Khoury's *Gate of the Sun* in six weeks, during which time he closed himself up in his apartment in Cairo in order to complete the task. We can assume, therefore, that Davies has probably been using the same strategy for all his translation projects. The time factor accounts for his economical translation and could explain his stance regarding footnoting and paratextual elements in general. In terms of his recent career in the translation profession, Davies has not yet acquired significant symbolic capital (in Bourdieu's sense), and is not, therefore, in a position that enables him to interfere directly in the text. The short time he was allotted for this translation also prevents him from having active textual, paratextual or extratextual agency. By the same token, neither do we know how long it took Gauthier to carry out this translation. Nevertheless, if we take into account the pleasure he took in doing the translation and the time that it would normally have taken him to see al-Aswany and to sign an agreement with the Arabic publisher in Cairo, it would seem reasonable to assume that he was allotted much more time than Davies.

Paratextual choices, which have to do with the translator's habitus, reflect part of the interaction taking place between the text and the translator and are therefore relevant to our understanding of the dynamics at play in translation. The tension that may take place between the text and the translator as different social and cultural bodies carrying different and sometimes contradictory worldviews and dispositions is also reflected at other levels of transfer such as transliteration of idioms and religious-related text.

### 3.3.6 Transliteration of Arabic idioms and translation of religion-related text

An important difference emerging between the translations of Davies and Gauthier lies in the frequency of using transliterated Arabic words in the target language. We can question here Gauthier's preference for transliterated words. Keen on keeping many Arabic words in his text and explaining them in footnotes, Gilles Gauthier obviously shows a desire to give an exotic aspect to the novel if we talk in term of target readership expectations. Far from being innocent choices, we can also interpret the lexical preferences in his translation as part of his ''exoticization'' process. On the other hand, Davies paid the highest regard to the smoothness and readability of English in strict compliance with the Anglo-American tradition. His translation involves translating ˮin a transparent, fluent invisible style in order to minimize the foreignness of the target textˮ (Venuti 1995, 20). In one of his talks hosted by the Centre of Translation Studies of the American University in Cairo in 2009, Davies evoked Venuti's domestication/ foreignisation binary approach of translation which he qualified as one of ˮthe most fascinating, complex and important issues in translation theory.ˮ He added that when he is translating he tends to listen to his ˮdeep seated instinctsˮ that push him in one direction

rather than thinking of translation in terms of any theoretical framework. However, his text is clearly showing an outright domesticating strategy, one in line with transparent translation practice. This fact is confirmed by what he said in another interview published on Al-Bawaba website on February 10, 2010 when he confessed that: ̏the sort of question that goes through my head while translating is what does the author really mean here and how would I say it if I were using English.̋ Accordingly, words or phrases such as *Allah Akbar*, *Ministère de Waqf*, *Djinn bleu, charia'* and many others used by Gauthier in their original form were straightforwardly rendered using idiomatic English by Davies.

More critically, both Davies and Gauthier left other Arabic words in their respective texts without any explanation. Davies left his readers on their own on several occasions; such is the case for the word *Fatiha* which stands for the opening chapter of the Holy Qur'ran which was used in English without any explanation at all. Another example of the religion-related concepts that both translators used without the least explanation is the notorious Arabic word "*jihaad*" which has made its way into many Western dictionaries. A translator may choose to use a word in this way to suggest that it has become familiar to readers of the target language or even to avoid taking a stance on it. In this way, however, the author unfortunately gives impetus to the biases and the false translations already circulating in Western society. The word ̏*jihad*̋, which literally means effort, strife or endeavour, and which has been erroneously rendered as *holy war* in English and *guerre sainte* in French, is generally confused with the word ̏*Qitaal*̋(killing or fighting). *Jihaad* may have nothing to do with fighting or war. The first step of ̏*jihad*̋ has to do with the self as one should overcome his own weaknesses and evil temptations. The struggle for the betterment of society, which only comes later, may only be at the

intellectual level. Needless to say that the fighting component of *Jihaad* should also be considered within its context of war and not of everyday life and that there is no such thing as a holy war that forces Islam on non-Muslims, as has been argued by the enemies of tolerance and cohabitation between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Also within the religious perspective, both Davies and Gauthier respectively rendered the Arabic word *Allah* into *God* and *Dieu* which, of course, does not carry all the meanings that the Islamic *Allah* has. To avoid serious misconceptions, the translators of a religious text should at least use some reference technique to clarify this word/notion which is now associated with Islamic creed and remains paradoxical with the Biblical beliefs and mode of understanding at many levels. With respect to translation of the Word *Allah,* Henri Meschonnic concludes in his essay ˝Texts Religieux en Traduction, Dieu ou Allah˝ that it is not correct from a theologico-political perspective to translate the word *Allah* into *God*. Meschonnic maintains in the same essay that when dealing with problems inherent to translating words associated with the Islamic creed, this word should be kept in its original form: ˝Mais si on traduit, ou plutôt si on ne traduit pas, en gardant 'Allah', on fait de l'Islam l'universel. Et c'est cette non-traduction qu'est la plus juste du point de vue théologico-politique de l'Islam, avec les conséquences qu'elle implique sur le continu de l'Islam et de l'humanisme à l'*oummanisne* de *oumma*, la communauté religieuse et politique. Dieu est la dénégation d'Allah.˝ (2007, 123)

Regarding the translation of the Qur'anic verses used in this novel, my extensive research in more than twenty English translations of the Quran available in print or online did not unfortunately reveal which translation Humphrey used for his text. To avoid copyright

issues, Davies himself may well have translated the Qur'anic passages himself, hence there is no match with any of the known modern Qur'an translations. However, in light of his habitus as a translator contracted by the AUC, his version bears an uncanny resemblance to the translation of the American translator Thomas Cleary published in 2004. This new contemporary translation, which appeared after the September 2001 events, prefers the word *God* to *Allah* and privileges clarity and readability of style over precision of meaning in translating some core Islamic creed notions. On the other hand, Gilles Gauthier used the version of the late French translator Denise Masson (first published by Gallimard in 1967) which is unique among French translations in using the phrase *celui qui fait miséricorde, le Miséricordieu* instead of *le Misericordieu, le Très Miséricordieu* or *le Très Mésicordieu, le Miséricordieu* or some expression in a similar vein. But what in particular makes Gauthier opt for Masson's version? It is arguably a similarity in their habituses. Gauthier's compatriot Denise Masson lived, like him, for many years in Morocco, particularly in the city of Marrakech where she died in 1994. While it is true that her translation bears the prints of the orientalist translation of the French translator Régis Blachère, it also represents a clear ecumenical effort to bring the followers of the three monotheist religions together. The three works she authored -*The Qur'an and the Judeo-Christian Revelation (1958)*, *Qur'anic and Biblical Monotheism, (*1976) and *The Three Ways of the One* (1983*)-* were born of her concern for promoting unity among religions. Indeed, she reminds us of the ecumenical translator André Chouraqui who translated the holy books of the three monotheist religions in an unprecedented effort to promote tolerance thought.[28]

---

[28] André Chouraqui is a world-famous ecumenical translator. Regardless of the shortcomings of his

In our attempt to explore factors that assign meaning to *The Yacoubian Building*, we have so far explored the role of the author and the two translators from a sociological perspective. Investigating the critical role of publishers as important agents of the book industry that not only tamper with meanings of a work but also determine the very existence of writers and translators is likewise of clear social relevance, and constitute our next point.

---

translation of the Qur'an, his ecumenical thinking and his translation of the books of the three monotheist religions make him an outstanding promoter of tolerance and cohabitation among humankind.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE TWO PUBLISHERS

### 4.1 The creator of the creator

Little seems simpler than buying a book from a bookstore. Yet, as often noted, the existence of books on the shelves of libraries and bookstores is not solely contingent upon intellectual value. Misconceptions about the real role of the different actors in the publishing industry abound. To shatter all illusions originating in the general public's ignorance of the field's many constraints, it need only be remembered that publishing is an intellectual adventure based on unremitting sacrifices. To make understanding accessible to a wide audience that may be overwhelmed by empty rhetoric, one can say that not only the books' suitability for publication, but also the authors and translators' existence largely depend on the authority of the publisher. This entity is ̈invested with the extraordinary power to ensure publication, to confer upon a text and its author a public existence along with the fame and recognition that this entails ̋ (Bourdieu 2008, 123)[29]. Publishing an author or a translator –which is also a consecration endowing him with the publisher's symbolic capital-- is tantamount to bringing him into existence. Since the author is a creator, publishing is in fact a 'creation of the creator' (Sapiro, 20002.3; Bourdieu 1977). One should also note that while the publication of books in general remains subject to many constraints, the process is far more complex for translation, and usually marks the culmination of an even more intricate power game. It is regretful that despite the fact that research on the role of publishers is of obvious social

---

[29] Bourdieu opened up a new area of thought focusing on the book industry and its implications for the translation practice. His close analysis of the field enabled him to develop his theory of the production and circulation of symbolic goods which appropriately account for the underlying power game governing publication and international circulation of books. According to Gisele Sapiro ̈despite some early significant studies, (Bourdieu 1977; Coser, Kadushin; and Powell 1982), the sociology of publishing did not develop before the late 1990s, in contrast to the history of the book and, more recently, the economics of the book market, which have become specialized domains ̋ (2008, 154).

relevance with regard to its significant implications for translation as a social practice, relatively little attention has been paid so far to these agents in translation studies.[30] From its sociological perspective of placing people centre-stage, the sociology of translation remains one of the early theories to have addressed publishers as active agents who are in the position to exclusively, or at least to a great extent, determine what is 'suitable' and 'unsuitable' material for publication[31]. Contrary to what some would be tempted to suppose, touching on the publishing industry or the mechanisms of the book market would not further fragment the field of translation studies which already incorporates a variety of subfields and disciplines. Far from overlapping or conflicting with other components, the broadening of its scope is a welcome way to extend its already interdisciplinary nature to what is indeed a neighbouring or a complimentary area of knowledge. If other translation approaches have mainly set aside the role of publishers, the sociology of translation starts from the assumption that research into the publishing field is not an unnecessary probe. Keeping the role of this agent under close scrutiny proves useful to understanding the dynamics at play in international relations and the real role of the translator as an intercultural agent. According to Gisele Sapiro,``publishers play a major role in the international circulation of books, in their original language as well as in translation. A sociological approach to translation considered as a social practice, thus needs to take into account this category of agents.''(2008, 154)

---

[30] Obviously, there are also some practical reasons for this lack of published material about publishing. Even if a scholar obtains some interesting data about the industry and its operators, he might not be able to publish it because of confidentiality constraints.
[31] This fact obviously depends on the structure and economic standing of the publication company. While the decision to publish may be taken by a single person for certain small publishers, the process of accepting a work for publication might be much more complicated for some big companies using reading committees, editors, scouts and foreign representatives

In the same passage on textual, paratextual and extratextual agency quoted in my previous chapter, Outi Paloposki maintains that "The translator's role may also extend to the whole of the book market (selection and availability of books) and in this way be formative of audience taste." (2009, 191). Here one should observe critical caution with regard to the translator's role in the book market, as translators may have this far-reaching influence only in some particular cases. We can cite here as an example those pioneering translators who were able to translate into Hebrew, Japanese or Brazilian Portuguese, because they were endowed with the necessary economic and symbolic capital, and who ultimately were crucial to the formation of their country's young literature. In this particular case, the translator has acquired the authority to contribute to constructing a nation's cultural identity and obviously conditions the reader's taste through his contribution to the image of translated cultures.[32] Otherwise it would be the translator who bows to public taste and to the publishing constraints. Apart from the support of some informed publishers and enlightened readers, original literary talents not reproducing the Western ideological and cultural models, for example, face enormous difficulties getting published or achieving wide circulation. Especially when the source language does not enjoy a high symbolic capital, the standards set by publishers for acceptable translations are obsessively determined by the receiving culture's dominant ideological, moral and aesthetic values. If they want to have a toehold in the market, works of translation must completely model themselves after the receiving culture's stereotypical image of other cultures as measured against the West.[33] By maintaining the

---

[32] This happened, for example, in Brazil and in Japan thanks respectively to the works of Monteiro Lobato and Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) (cf. John Milton 2003 and Akiko Uchiyama 2007)

[33] These stereotypical views of the civilized West and uncivilized others are obviously contested by many enlightened Westerners who are still fighting against the backdrop of these mainstream representations.

same commonplace assumptions about the Other, most published translations reflect the unequal power relations between countries and their languages and are no more than an incarnation of the logics at work within the confines of the publishing industry. Heilbron and Sapiro appropriately maintain that traditional approaches taking language rather than other elements as a starting point for enquiry ignore the social conditions which make this 'art of understanding' possible and obscure the role of different agents in international exchanges. To break with these approaches which have long prevented us from raising the right set of questions, one has to situate translation practice in relation to the dynamics in cultural fields and to the modes of domination in international space.˝ In other words, "pour comprendre l'acte de traduire, il faut donc l'imbriquer dans les rapports de force entre les pays et leurs langues, et, par conséquent, le situer dans la hiérarchie internationale.˝ (Heilbron & Sapiro 2008, 4)

A work such as *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* translated from an internationally peripheral language like Arabic into English, understood as a hyper-central language in the international translation system, would never have the same implications as works rendered into Arabic from English, French or any other 'central' Western language.[34] The question here is more than an issue of cultural difference or of the linguistic equivalence of languages. Translation from or into a particular language, which is only a reflection of its weight in the global system, is no more than a manifestation of the power relations

---

[34] In his attempt to explain the unbalanced circulation of book translation between the different language groups of the world, Johan Heilbron (2010, 308) conceives of the international translation market as a world system having˝a hierarchical structure, with central, semi-central and peripheral languages. Relying on their share in the total number of translated books worldwide, the author maintains that the available figures unambiguously indicate that English is by far the most central language˝ and that languages like French, German and Russian also have a central role. Covering no more than 1 per cent of the international market of translation, Arabic occupies a peripheral position in this international translation system.

between language groups and has to be understood in terms of the mechanisms governing translation flow between these groups.[35] Depending on the position they hold in the international market of translation, languages/cultures either impose their norms and worldview or imitate those of other languages/cultures as an example of good practice.[36]According to Heilbron:

> The more central the cultural production of a country is, the more it serves as an example to other countries, and the less it is itself concerned with the cultural production from other countries […] the core of an international cultural system has the highest status; it is carefully observed, followed and emulated, and at the same time it is much less oriented towards products and producers from outside the centre (2010, 314)

It is therefore only natural that, when a work originating in a supposedly inferior literary tradition is selected for translation into a 'hyper-central' language like English, the Western model and mode of thought is always presented as an example to emulate in every respect.[37] To be translated into a major Western language is a big privilege, given that the bulk of translations flows from the core to the periphery rather than the other way round. Therefore, works originally written in Arabic as a 'marginal' language, for

---

[36] A number of models with different degrees of merit were used by scholars to account for the international circulation of books. These models include Immanuel Wallerstain's core-periphery systemic model (1974, 1980,1989) which he used in his world system analysis, and Abraham de Swaan's (1993, 2001) use of it to explain the power relations between linguistic groups. (Sapiro 2008, 158); the systemic model was also used by Pascal Casanova in his *World Republic of Letters* (1999). Johan Heilbron (2010) combined the systemic model with Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital to account for circulation of books in translation the circulation in his article "towards a sociology of translation: book translations as a cultural world system." A whole chapter in Mona baker *Critical Readings In Translation* is devoted to translation in world systems. (Cf. Mona Baker 2010). Even-Zohar used a system-based theory- the polysystem theory- to account for the importation of books into Hebrew which heavily relied on translations to create its own genres. According to him, 'les oeuvres' take a central position in the target system while other works like children literature and popular literature remain at the periphery.

[37] According to Heilbron," The structure of the world-system of translation also determines the level of importation. The more central a language is in the international translation system, the smaller the proportion of translations into this language".

instance, must be manipulated to obey certain prevalent and long-standing stereotypes and assumptions about the author and his people. In addition to *'Imarat Ya'qoubian*, Huda Sha'rawi's book *Mudhakirati* is a case that aptly demonstrates mainstream inaccurate ideas of representation swaying most Westerners about the Arab World. The very Arabic title *Mudhakirati* which literally translates as *Memoirs* was purposely turned into *Harem[38] years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist*. It is not arbitrarily that the title incorporates the Arabic-derived Turkish word *harem* associated in the average Western mind with oppression and sexual exploitation of women at the hands of the opposite sex. According to Mohja Kahf, author of the article˝ Packaging Huda: Sha'rawi's Memoirs in the United States Reception Environment˝, the English text, made widely available to the English reading public and frequently taught in US college courses in disciplines such as women studies and Middle Eastern studies, is unambiguously consolidating stereotypes and misconceptions about women in this part of the world. Under the effect of the power game pressures, the Arabic text was wilfully transformed to fit into the American general public's stereotypes of the Arab woman often depicted in the West as  a victim of gender oppression, an escapee of her intrinsically oppressive culture and as the pawn of Arab male power.˝ (2010, 30)[39]  This situation may be understood in light of Jean-Marc Gouanvic's explanation of the

---

[38] According to the online American heritage dictionary *Harem* has the following meanings :

1. A house or a section of a house reserved for women members of a Muslim household.
2. The wives, concubines, female relatives, and servants occupying such a place.
3. A group of women sexual partners for one man.

[29] Cf. Kahf M. (2008),˝Packaging Huda: Sha'rawi's Memoirs in the United States Reception Environment˝ in Baker Mona ed. *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*, Routledge, New York, pp 28-45

relationship between hegemonies of Western cultures and the ultimate power of literary translation:

> The heaviest effect of translation (as in ''heavy tendencies'' in economics) is to generate modes of grasping reality specific to hegemonic culture [...] and particularly Western cultures, which have constructed themselves as translation cultures. These modes of grasping reality tend to suppress other expressive models based on different beliefs, and linked to other paradigms regarding relation to nature, to transcendence or to ways of grasping the world and the role of the human being in society which are completely different from those of occidentals (Gouanvic 2002, 166)

More than this, a publisher's norms reflecting the workings of the field of publishing usually go beyond translation itself and apply to the very process of selecting works that can easily lend themselves to translation. To ensure profitability, the majority of big publishers deal with cultural products from a purely economic perspective. Overwhelmed by the increasingly consumerist global climate, major publishing houses become blind to the specificities of cultural products and see books as no more than commodities produced, packaged and consumed according to the laws of the market and undergoing the same logics of commerce. (Heilbron & Sapiro 2008)[40] It is not randomly that *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* was judged by the English and French publishers HarperCollins and Actes Sud as having the potential to succeed in the Western hemisphere. Rather than bridging gaps between the two cultures, all the characters and events of the novel consolidate a series of orientalist preconceptions of the Arab world and its major religion. In fact, *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* crafts a haunting tale of both personal and political corruption,

---

[40] In their article ̎ la traduction littéraire un objet sociologique ̎, these two sociologists and scholars of translation bemoaned both the text-related and economic-based approaches. They maintained that these alone cannot account for translation and proposed a sociologic model that takes into account the peculiarity of books as cultural goods not underlying the same logic as commodities.

ignorance and intolerance that undermine lives in modern Cairo. Rather than nurturing an ongoing dialogue between the two cultures, Alaa al-Aswany's finely honed descriptive pen completely resonates with the average Western man's image of Egypt and its people. This has to do with his habitus as a liberal Egyptian intellectual, as we have noted earlier in the thesis. As a left-wing activist within the Kifaya (Enough) movement since its creation in 2004, al-Aswany sets himself as the intellectual adversary of any religious or state-supporting thought. He has been using the symbolic recognition he acquired in literature to criticize his political opponents. Far from bridging the gap between cultures, Islam is portrayed as promoting hatred and violence against followers of other faiths, Muslims as quick-tempered and aggressive, and Muslim women as oppressed and having no role in society but to satisfy male sexual desires. This is one of the reasons why the novel fully fulfills the general public's expectations about this region of the world and fits into publishable material from the publisher's commercial perspective. This also largely explains why al-Aswany's works in general and *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* in particular were greeted by Western reading public and critics alike with something akin to wonderment.

The bitter experience Humphrey Davies had when he once translated an Arab woman writer is another proof of the logic underlying the selection of books for translation and how it works within the confines of the book industry. As critics had long negatively commented on Davies' list of translations as being markedly male, this professional translator was directly faced with this critique in a talk held in 2010 at the American University in Cairo's Center for Translation Studies. Davies responded to the critique with an anecdote which unfortunately reveals troublesome facts about the untold secrets of the book industry. He said that he had once translated an Arab female writer whose

name he did not want to disclose but this translation never saw the light of day. He added

that the reason behind this is that when he proposed it to the US publisher, he discovered

that the author's work did not fit the publisher's idea of ⸢how an Arab woman writer

should sound." During the same talk, Davies emphasized the importance of the publisher's

role and extensively discussed the issue of U.S. and U.K. publisher expectations

regarding the literature their reading publics were prepared to buy.

Bourdieu has likewise criticised the faulty laws that maintain the tight grip of big

publishers on the book industry, and which increasingly impose an unfair circulation of

cultural goods[41]. Having worked for long years as an editor of a book series,[42] Bourdieu

combined his long field experience with critical reading to develop a relevant theory that

inspired myriad scholars after him. Based on the concepts of symbolic goods and field

theory, his theoretical framework has major explanatory capacity and constitutes an

essential contribution to our understanding of the publishing world and its relevance to

translation studies. It is particularly relevant to us in that it gives us insight into the

practices of publishers and helps to frame our inquiry when we address the publication of

*'Imarat Ya'qoubian* into French by Actes Sud and into English by Harper Perennial.

After conducting research on the field of publishing using bibliographical data, statistics

and interviews of the different actors of the book industry, Bourdieu concluded that this

field was structured around an opposition between large-scale and small-scale circulation.

---

[41] Bourdieu, whose reputation was burgeoning the world over, had become a very public figure and clearly denounced 'the commercial constraints that are increasingly imposed on publishers in the wake of growing concentration around large groups and the rationalization process' (Sapiro 2008, 155).
[42] Bourdieu created *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* magazine in 1975 and was its editor until he died in 2002.

The big and venerable publishing enterprises such as Gallimard, Le Seuil and Minuit [43] were concurrently retaining all forms of commercial and symbolic capital, while the smaller publishers in the early stages of development were almost completely deprived of all forms of capital. Bourdieu would also remark that whereas innovation was mainly supplied by small publishers that had no choice but to discover new authors because they could not afford to pay well-known writers, publishers with the highest amount of symbolic capital preferred traditional novels to more original literary experiments. This fact was reflected in the share of translated literature, which represented more than 25% of the lists for small publishers but hardly exceeded 10% for big companies mainly translating bestsellers, almost exclusively from English and other main European languages into French.

The logic underpinning the publication of the English and French versions of *'Imarat Ya'qoubian*, respectively by HarperCollins and Actes Sud,  follows the logic of Bourdieu's theory of cultural production and symbolic capital and his explanation of the two structures governing large scale and small scale circulation. The publisher of the French version, Actes Sud, fits into the second category of Bourdieu's categorization, i.e. small-scale. Unlike the more established and big publishers that rely on their financial and symbolic capital to attract local, English and other Western foreign bestsellers, Actes Sud, which was founded in 1978 in southern France is a publisher with limited financial means. While a large French publisher enjoying high financial and symbolic capital like Editions de Minuit, for example, publishes no translations at all, presumably because it

---

[43] There are many variables that determine whether a publication house is considered a small or a big publisher. These include, among others, legal and financial status, the number of employees, location (venerable publishers are located in Paris, while small publishers are settled in other regions of France or overseas), age and seniority and Nobel Prizes received by the works they publish.

already has plenty of local prestigious authors (Sapiro 2008, 157), Actes Sud has had to acknowledge the importance of foreign literature in order to survive. According to the publisher's official website, the publisher is relying heavily on translation from peripheral languages like Arabic or Turkish. Its most recent translation list of 2011 includes the Egyptian Mohamed al-Bissatie's *la Faim* translated by Edwige Lambert, the Tunisian Habib Selmi's *Les Humours de Marie-Claire* translated by Yves Gonzalez-Quijano and the Turkish Murathen Mingan's *Les Gants et Autres Nouvelles* translated by Jean Descat. Actes Sud's publication strategy can actually be understood within the general logic governing small scale versus large scale publishers. According to Bourdieu:

> Policies regarding foreign literature may offer a better idea of the strategies adopted by large and small houses when it comes to publishing French writers, indeed there is a very pronounced opposition between smaller editors who act as discoverers, investing their cultural and linguistic competence in the search for avant-garde works in minor languages and countries, and the major commercial editors who are led by scouts or agents on the lookout for commercially valuable information, who publish international bestsellers mainly translated from English. These are purchased at great cost in aggressive bidding wars that emphasize profitability (as measured by sales figures) over content. ( 2008, 147)

Within this same logic, the company also launched several special series, exclusively aimed to import texts from less acknowledged literary traditions; these series include Actes Sud littérature Monde Arabe, Actes Sud Lettres Turques and Actes Noirs. Far from expressing a heroic indifference to the publisher's economic needs, this strategy of publishing little-known authors in translation is not devoid of sound business reasoning. Publishing from 'peripheral' languages has proven to bear long-term commercial success

for this company [44]. To publish authors such as al-Aswany cannot be considered a freak venture. Indeed, the three novels authored by al-Aswany and translated by Gilles Gauthier were reprinted in a second edition, including his *J'aurais Aimé Être Egyptien* [45] first published only in 2009. Even if they are initially unknown names when they emerge on the cultural scene, authors not writing in 'central' languages gradually become known and start generating material gain for the publishers who 'created' them. While it is true that they owe their existence to their 'discoverers: avant-garde critics and writers, enlightened booksellers and informed readers', (Bourdieu 2008, 136) they mainly owe their survival and the symbolic capital they may accumulate to their adherence to the publishing game's intricate rules.

If the publication of *L'Immeuble Yacoubian* was mainly dictated by literary value and by the clear publication strategy of Actes Sud as an informed publisher, the publication of the English version (in two editions) by a major publisher like Harper Perennial is arguably based on a logic of short-term profitability and a high probability of success. The novel was first published in English translation by the American University in Cairo Press, a not-for-profit university publisher. Al-Aswany soon achieved wide circulation in Arabic and in English as his work was highly mediatised both at home and abroad where he became the first widely recognized Arab writer since Nagib Mahfūz. It is only when the author gained a large readership and a certain symbolic capital that *The Yacoubian Building,* was republished by Harper Perennial, and in the paperback form by HarperCollins in subsequent editions. If the decision to publish al-Aswany by the

---

[44] Casanova (2010) argues that in view of the uneven flow of books in the international translation market, it is more accurate to account for the relationship between languages in terms of a dominating/dominated binary model rather than a central versus peripheral opposition. (Cf. Casanova 2010)
[45] The English title for this novel is *Friendly Fire.*

American University in Cairo Press was most likely devoid of economic logic, the guarantee of more widespread success was arguably the first priority of a big publisher like Harper Perennial. Having published many bestsellers including Josh Kilmer-Pucell's *I Am Not Myself These Days,* Barry Schwartz's *The Paradox of Choice* and Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, this hardcover publisher of HarperCollins (a book-publishing subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp) fits into Bourdieu's first category of major publishing houses. Headquartered in New York and with divisions in Toronto, London and Sydney, this company created in 1964 consistently maintains a modern classics series that publishes famous authors. Thanks to its position in the book industry overall and to the prestige of its publications list (reflecting its symbolic capital), this publisher ensured a much more extensive circulation for Alaa al-Aswany. Since being translated into English, which has also functioned as an intermediary language, *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* has been rendered into more than twenty languages.[46] Another fact demonstrating the economic logic that regulates big publishing companies is revealed by Rachel Aspden in his *New Statesman* article ''Thinking About Cairo'' published on Nov 3, 2008. In this article, Aspden maintains that the success of *The Yacoubian Building* on the international scene forced some Western publishers to reconsider their attitude towards Arabic fiction. Bloomsburg, for example, has recognized the commercial prospects of Arabic works in the West by launching a new Bloomsburg Qatar publishing house. The chief-executive of the company also mentioned to journalists during the launching ceremony that "*The Yacoubian Building* shows how the market can be in England and America."

---

[46] These include Norwegian and Russian.

One should not, however, assume that the creation of new publishing houses in the Arab region is necessarily equivalent to granting more freedom to works involving Arabic. Within the present state of affairs, publishers still bow to the market logic and do not assume the final authority in determining meaning. One can therefore argue that the translator's (implicit and explicit) compliance with pre-existing norms and the obligation to translate according to certain rules or tastes is nothing else but a sort of censorship in disguise tantamount to the death of the author in the Barthesian sense.

Since many other accompanying elements of a work of art combine to assign meaning, one is of course stating the obvious in saying that a work's meaning is not limited to the text in its crude form. It is then not just a mere coincidence that publishers or whatever other agents involved in the final form of a book use their authority to interfere with its intent and shape its reception. According to Sapiro, research focusing on reception ˮ shares a common interest in the role and social properties of importers (writers, translators, publishers) and the literary and social uses of the translated work according to the specific stakes of the target field. This allows publishers' strategies and their choices to be located within a broader cultural context″ (2008, 163)

**CHAPTER FIVE: RECEPTION OF THE NOVEL**

As we have observed in the previous chapters of this thesis, paying due tribute to such important aspects as the production, circulation and reception of works within both the source and receiving social space allows us to gain a more adequate insight into translation as a social phenomena. Thus far we have used a sociological approach in our analysis, concretely to explain the behaviour of the two translators and the two publishers of *'Imarat Ya'qoubian*. However, the context of reception equally determines meaning(s) generated by literary works and warrants that we look into aspects of reception. In what follows, we discuss our conceptual point of departure with regard to reception. Since the paratext plays an important role in structuring a literary work's space of reception, we analyze some of the paratextual techniques used for the novel. By paratextual techniques we mean verbal and non-verbal elements, such as illustrations, the cover presentation, the author and the translator's name, etc, that accompany the work and aim to give it a certain meaning (Genette 1991, 262). Starting from the assumption that the market of books has its own game rules regarding the process of production and appraisal*,* we then look into some of the many reviews of '*Imarat Ya'qoubian* in the Western press in order to show how they were crafted with intent to shape the reader's response to the novel. Finally, we argue that translation and reception practices are not without repercussions for the Other and its image, especially for those regions whose dissemination of literary works has been limited.  Current book industry expectations, in terms of common place images and representations, need to be dislodged, revisited and revised if we are to witness a new taste for translated literature in the future.

## 5.1 Conceptual point of departure

Even if reception has been investigated for many years in the literary field, it is still deemed by some as relatively under-researched in translation studies (Sapiro 2008)[47]. Bourdieu was one of the first scholars to grapple with issues associated with reception. Through his insightful analysis of the circulation of books as a cultural product in his article "A conservative revolution in publishing" (2008[2002]), Bourdieu shows how powerful critics interfere with the creation and cultivation of literary taste in France. Appointed by particular publishers to oversee and manage their book series and reading committees, influential agents of the book industry use their power and prestige to promote the circulation and readership of particular works. (p.163) Further elaborating on Bourdieu's work on the publishing industry, Sapiro's article "Translation and the field of publishing" is more specific to translation as she underscores publishers' strategies to import particular works or source languages or to emphasize certain aspects of a work's meaning in translation in order to structure its space of reception in a particular way (p. 163). Within the same perspective Heilbron and Sapiro (2007) show how the representation of the source culture and the position of the language in the international system guide the way works will be treated in translation. According to them:

> Reception is in part determined by the representations of the culture of origin and by the status (majority or minority) of the language itself. Recipients interpret translated texts as a function of the stakes prevailing in the field of reception. Translated works may be appropriated in diverse and sometimes contradictory

ways, as a function of the stakes proper to the intellectual
field of reception (Heilbron & Sapiro 2007, 103)

This underscores the reason why the study of reception should be considered as an integral and organic component of any approach that claims to adequately take into account translation dynamics. Theories of reception and specific reception strategies determine not only how the Other is constituted in the first place, but also how the constituted image is intended to be consumed. In order to properly account for the role of translation and its underlying power dynamics, we need to look into the ¨sociology of the text as a production in the process of being carried out, of the product itself and its consumption in the social fields, the whole seen in a relational manner ˝ (Gouanvic, 2007)[48]. This focus on multiple levels of translation practice is clearly one of the merits of a sociological approach to translation. Starting as early as the initiation phase, a sociologically configured lens focuses not only on the different production phases of translation but also probes the end-product and the accompanying circumstances aimed to determine its understanding and the consumption of such elements as the paratext.

### 5.2 The translation paratext

The paratext is defined as those things in a published work that accompany the text, including the cover presentation and lay-out, the author's name, the preface, the postface and illustrations; they have either a positive or negative impact on the reading. With regard to paratext Gérard Genette and Marie Maclean say:

---

[48] Cited by Wolf, Michaela. ¨The Emergence of a Sociology of Translation˝ in Wolf, Michaela ed. (2007), p.18.

One does not always know if one should consider that they [elements of the paratext] belong to the text or not, but in any case they surround it and prolong it, precisely in order to present it, in the usual sense of this verb, but also in its strongest meaning; to *make it present*, to assure its presence in the world, its reception and its consumption, in the form, nowadays at least of a book. … thus the paratext is for us the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public. (1991, 261)

As such, the paratextual elements of a work contribute organically to its formal setting, surpassing the boundaries of mere aesthetics and playing a critical role in defining a work's presence and meaning. They are a set of tactics that help determine the negative or positive presence of a work of literature. A quick glance at the paratextual features of *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* reveals how far this novel clings to ready-made conventions and mainstream stereotypes with regard to the source culture. The cultural and political agenda of the translation is clear not only in the strictly textual elements of the translation but also in its presentation, associating by implication a negative discourse already in circulation about this region of the world. In other words, the paratextual elements accompanying the novel constitute a clear statement of power, one which ultimately serves the purpose of shaping Western consciousness around a certain degree of intolerance and narrow-mindedness (non-consilience).

The very cover of the book aptly illustrates the point we are trying to make here. Like many Arabic books in translation, *'Imarat Ya'qoubian*'s English version misappropriates imagery of a veiled woman by featuring it on the cover page. In contrast to the French version's cover picture, which represents one of the novel's characters (Taha el-Jazli), the picture on Harper Perennial's English language publication features a young veiled

woman with her partner. In reality, the image actually contradicts the content of the text. Neither the female protagonist nor any of the novel's young characters wears the Islamic scarf. Since selecting images for a book's front cover is an important and time-intensive part of the pre-publication phase, it behooves us to investigate what exactly the chosen image is intended to convey. On one hand, one could argue that it is used to bring to the surface connections that convey negative value judgments about the Other. With apparently no motivation or commitment to change, the American publisher and the bulk of similarly-minded book industry operators seem to prefer putting pictures of veiled women, mosques or deserts on their cover pages in order to highlight the exotic nature or Orientalist perceptions of works dealing with or originating in the East. By maintaining the Western representation of the Islamic headscarf used as a symbol to depict female oppression in Arab societies, the veiled woman's picture serves an unveiled purpose. The underlying aim of this picture seems solely to be one of triggering a series of misconceptions and stereotypes that lead to promoting certain value judgments, and in so doing, responding to a largely uninformed Western public's expectations. The picture, which also shows two mosque minarets in the background, clearly puts Islam in a central thematic position and provides a point of orientation to the potential reader. Contrary to the arguably more neutral cover of the French version of the novel, the English publisher has designed the cover page in such a way as to easily capture the attention of potential readers, making it easy for them to identify it with an Islamic region[49].

---

[49] After the end of the Cold War and particularly after the September 11 attacks, Islam would become associated in the average Western mind with terrorism, with a 'conflict of civilizations', and with a series of hot spots throughout the world.

Similarly, the front cover page attempts to confer 'authority', by indicating that the book is an international bestseller, with quotes judiciously placed on the top and middle positions spotlighting the *New York Review of Books*' description of the novel as 'an amazing glimpse into the Egyptian society'.[50] The important role the paratext plays in presenting the work to the reader cannot be underestimated. It aims to convey particular expectations and certain value judgments. In addition to studying these types of paratextual tactics, reception theory also examines the whole atmosphere that might be created to accompany a work of art and influence the reader's interaction with it. This is mainly carried out through reviews and articles, a territory that is especially fertile for areas like critical reception.

### 5.3 Critical Reception

Affecting or even constructing *a priori* the taste of the general public overall, critical reception is an effective way to prepare readers for their tasks of evaluating specific works or interpreting them in particular ways. The meaning of a work in general depends to a great extent on how the receiving environment is shaped to support a particular understanding of that work. According to Bourdieu:

> Texts circulate without their context. Their signification is provided by the context of reception. The publisher, the series, sometimes the preface, the presentations of the text or of its author along with the translation itself- all these elements combine to assign meaning to the translated text even before the critical reception which must also be taken into account. (Cited in Sapiro 2008, 163)

---

[50] This top middle position quotation of the New York Review of books literally reads 'captivating and controversial- an amazing glimpse of modern Egyptian society and culture'. The back cover and the two first pages of the novel are also used to mention some of the praise received by the novel and its author.

Unable or unwilling to shake current book industry conventions, critiques and reviews of *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* offer readers the same repetitive stereotypical image about the Other. By instigating and mobilizing a number of familiar reception tactics, the novel ironically ends up consolidating the same set of old beliefs and values that inform the Western view of the Other and affect the interpretation of his or her experience. Even if the author wishes to critique these beliefs and values in the text, the paratextual information furnished by the publisher undermines the authorial motive. Evidence lends credence to this claim, and we will investigate and analyze the traces of some systematic practices that aim to shape the receiver's understanding at multiple levels. Within this perspective, the bulk of reviews which accompanied the launch of the novel or were published afterwards not only insist on portraying the fixed image of the Other but also on interrogating his or her values.

The international website of books and publishing industry news *The Publishers Weekly*, for instance, published an interview on 25 August 2008 with Alaa al-Aswany entitled ˶the Sindbad of Literature˝. The weekly publication reported that this Egyptian author is now 'the world's bestselling Arab-language novelist and that his debut novel, *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* ˶sold close to a million copies and was made into a \$3-million movie, the biggest ever budget of any film produced in Egypt.˝ It should be noted, however, that by nicknaming him the Sinbad[51] of literature, the article/interview testifies as to how the Western press is trying to shape the space of reception of the novel. This nickname is clearly meant to allude to *Sinbad the Mariner* associated in the Western mind with the

---

[51] According to The online dictionary ˶thefreedictionary˝:

Sinbad - in the Arabian Nights: a hero who tells of the fantastic adventures he had in his voyages.

*Arabian nights* and its strange and strikingly unusual adventures.[52] One should also note that while the *Arabian Nights* has long been considered representative of Arabic literature in the West, the Arabic literary tradition -long and venerable- has not necessarily consecrated this work with such an honour.

Quite unsurprisingly, many other reviews or articles explicitly refer to the novel in erotic terms. While ironically highlighting the novel's interrogation of Arab society's patriarchy, the review in *The Guardian* on Sept 15, 2007 furthermore adds that the novel "…offers a rare insight into the country's sexuality in vivid passages of erotic prose". After explicitly evoking human rights and the rise of radical Islamism as two of the main concerns Western countries have with regard to the region, a review published in the newspaper *The Globe & Mail* on June 17, 2008 similarly highlights the sexual aspect of the novel, insisting that the novel has 'plenty of sex'. The writer of the review was keen on clarifying to the readers al-Aswany's position vis-à-vis the sexual urge: "for Mr. al-Aswany, sex is just another way his characters express themselves. The scandalized reactions some of the scenes elicit is more proof to him that something's gone awry in the Arab and Muslim world." Most importantly, one of the book reviews describes the novel as the Arabic version of the well-known movie *Sex and the City*, to wit: "Sex and the City, Egyptian-style: controversial bestseller offers a lurid snapshot of Cairo", reads the *Observer* book-review dated Feb 18, 2007. Within the same vein, the

---

[52] According to the *Encyclopaedia of Literary Translation into English*, *The One Thousand and One Nights*, generally known as the Arabian Nights, is "a collection of stories, partly of Arab origin. The Arabic source by an unknown author is based on a 9th-century Persian text. The individual texts are set in framing narrative and purport to be told to the Persian king Shahriyar by his vizier's daughter Shahrazad (Scheherazade), who by her story-telling must hold the king's attention from night to night, on pain of death. The tales best known in English are *Aladdin*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* and *Sinbad the Sailor*." (p.1390)

article signed by Rachel Aspen also evokes what she calls the "exotic sheen of the writer's descriptions of gay sex."

Since such comments are far from being innocent and are published in mainstream media, one can reasonably raise relevant questions of reception and ask why critical reviews are written with intent to shape the understanding of the average Western reader in a certain direction. One possible answer emerges from translation scholar Jeremy Munday who informs us that:

> The reviewers' comments indicate and to some extent determine how translations are read and received in the target culture. Each of these players has a particular position and role within the dominant cultural and political agendas of their time and place. (2008, 143-144)

Some might argue that this canonic image of the Other is fair insofar as it does not challenge public consensus and conforms to the rules of the game. To a certain degree, this argument could be valid. However, it is worth examining the grounds on which this consensus is made.

In reality, individual publishers and other agents of the book industry significantly contribute to rendering these kinds of images conventional. Through their decisions and actions, individual publishers and all those who contribute to conditioning user reception of translation not only concede to commonplace value judgments but also consolidate and in some way create them. This negative effect emerging from the reception techniques that accompany a work of translation and which aim to shape the receivers' understanding in a certain direction is what Chesterman (2007) refers to as 'translation repercussion'.

## 5.2 Translation Repercussion

Negative reception practices can have drastic, even disastrous, effects on many levels. Andrew Chesterman uses the term 'translation repercussion' to describe the effect of translation at the cultural level. According to him,"examples of repercussions might be the canonization of a literary work, change in the evolution of the target language, changes in norms and practices, changes in the perception of cultural stereotypes" (2007, 180). However, the scope of these repercussions can clearly be widened to include negative reinforcement of prevailing popular stereotypes. The publication of translated books can indeed be used to reinforce perceptions and stereotypical representations of the Arabo-Islamic culture. In fact, the existence of many inaccurate, mainstream ideas defining the collective Western memory about this region of the world is- partly at least- the result of a long translation legacy. One could argue that these conceptions first took shape in the early renditions of the Qur'an into European languages[53], followed by successive translations of the tales of *The One Thousand and One Nights* which are bursting with eroticism and sexual adventures. First translated from Arabic in the 'belles infidèles' era by the French orientalist Antoine Galland, these tales were adapted to the taste of the time and continue to inspire writers and filmmakers, influencing the Western conceptions about the Eastern Other.

---

[53] The Qur'an was rendered into Latin as early as the Middle Ages. The first translations of the holy book of Islam into modern European languages appeared before the 17th century. The first English translation based on Du Ruyer's translation entitled *L'Alcoran de Mahomet* was carried out by the Scotsman Alexander Ross in 1649. In addition to reproducing the French title, this translation reads: '…and newly Englished translation, for the satisfaction of that desire to look into the Turkish vanities' (Mustapha, 1998, 206).

The typical reproaches made against the Arabo-Islamic world remained unchanged throughout the Middle Ages and modern times. After the September 11 attacks, we witnessed a heightened interest in works of Arab writers, but not an appreciable 'reform' in literary tastes. For the bulk of literary translation from Arabic into English carried out in the United Kingdom and the United States there has been no form of resistance and no challenge to the authority, provenance and institutions that represent and articulate the Other. The book industry has remained faithful to the projection of common and acceptable images, never giving in to the contrary impulse of upsetting the readers' horizon of expectations.

## 5.5 Upsetting expectations

There is only one way to limit this type of translation repercussion. Subverting the literary norms of the target culture is one strategy. Translations in general can insist on resistance to a modern literary orthodoxy that makes the West its sole conceptual centre of gravity. Furthermore, a literary work cannot be considered as an independent entity, nor understood in total isolation, detached from overall production and reception circumstances. As previously stated in chapter three, the circulation of books is determined by a number of international market variables. To understand the flow of foreign literatures in translation, one must position it not only in relation to the international space of circulation of books, but also to the structure and structuring of the space of reception.

This perfectly applies to *The Yacoubian Building* (we are here referring to the English version). One might say that the effect-generating paratext and the critical reception of

the work show no signs of struggle against conformity to stereotypical representations, exotism and clichés about the Arabs and Muslims as guiding principles of the mass of literary translation in the United States and Europe. This status quo can be shaken, perhaps, only by encouraging the emergence of a new public taste and bringing into play other mechanisms that would constitute a new statement of power in the unequal international book system. Getting rid of biased stereotypes to which Westerners are habitually exposed furnishes not only the domain of Arabic literature but all non-Western literatures with an opportunity to shed the reductive assessments associated with them but also a chance to tangibly assert their right to a more meaningful presence in the international marketplace of readers.

**CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this thesis is essentially twofold. It has sought to expand on our conceptualization of a sociology of translation, in theory and in practice, by examining a work of Arabic literature in translation into two major world languages: English and French. Indeed, one of the key questions motivating the thesis research has been to find ways that theory and practice can work together, and in so doing enhance our understanding of under-researched translation phenomena. Nevertheless, the thesis has sought neither to formulate new laws or norms, nor to devise absolute theoretical formulations purporting to account for all translational behaviours, or aiming to state the relations between all variables at stake in the translation act. As the goal of the thesis was not to reinterrogate the theoretical underpinnings of the conceptual approach used in any exclusive way, and as certain constraints limited any full-fledged study of a particular corpus, we limited our subject of investigation to only some of the aspects we found relevant to the English and French translations of *'Imarat Ya'qoubian*. Consequently, the research undertaken speaks in broad terms, even while seeking to suggest further avenues of investigation that could eventually enlighten our perspectives on literary production and translation in the Arabic-speaking world.

Our overview of Arabic literature in translation provides the reader with an introduction to Arabic literary expression in translation since the time Western readers generally first became exposed to its existence. As the first chapter of this thesis has shown, until the twentieth century, translation from Arabic was highly dependent on political and religious agendas and the path of translation from this language had been far from smooth. Remarkably, the translations of literary texts from Arabic was also the

pioneering work of just a few translators and publishers until 1988, the year in which the Nobel prize for literature was awarded to the Egyptian novelist Nagib Mahfūz.

In chapter two, we have discussed some of the salient ways in which concepts in translation studies have evolved over the last four decades. The account we provided from the role of the translator's perspective is inevitably a very condensed one and can do little more than give an impression of some of the main developments that have characterised our discipline in its short history. Of particular interest to this research has been the Bourdieusian approach to a sociology of translation that attempts to address theoretical and empirical bases through the concept of habitus. Indeed, this tool allowed us to examine a variety of relationships- author, translator, publisher- that inevitably were manifest in al-Aswany's work, leading to larger critical questions on the reception of translated works from little-known or little-understood areas of the world. Chapter three focused on the author and the two translators. Far from providing any definite formulations that purport to account for all translational behaviours, our emphasis in chapter three has been on the habitus as a way of making sense of the world, not as a way of predicting spontaneous behaviour.

Similarly, we have sought to engage in the interplay between theory and practice in chapter four, where my focus turns to the domain of publishers. Since in most cases, the final published translation does not reflect all of the translator's deliberate choices, we tried to draw attention to the key mediating role of these frequently ignored and nevertheless ubiquitous agents. This chapter also looks into the often overlooked significance of symbolic capital in the international circulation of books.

Chapter five examined some of the ways in which the reception of *'Imarat Ya'qoubian* has been shaped in/ for the West. We seek to show how the English and French versions of the novel fail to participate in the act of reframing engrained social and cultural conflicts, and in fact, conversely, end up participating in the consolidation of stereotypes or even in the construction of a more intense atmosphere in intercultural relations. We also argue in this chapter that we should break the law of exclusively importing a particular type or ˵brand˶ of works and writers that make the West their centre of gravity if we want translated works to bring added value to Western culture.

What, then, does the future bode for Arabic literature in the West? The influence of translation on the development of Arabic literature in the world cannot be overstated. Commenting on the often overlooked role of translation in the international circulation of books, Biesla (2011) highlights the pivotal role of translation in cultural production and maintains that ˵literatures are constituted relationally in a highly unequal international field˶. (2011, 14) This inequality constitutes a hindrance to the free movement of Arabic books to the Western hemisphere, for although the number of translations has risen steadily since the watershed year of 1988, the circulation of translated works from Arabic remains proportionally small by Western standards. While it is true that the Arab world can boast an increasing number of novels published in English and French translation in particular, major publishers in these languages still seem relatively inaccessible to Arabic literature[54]. With a less imbalanced circulation of books on the international scene, the future outlook for Arabic literature in translation would seem promising. Improving the flow of translation from Arabic into other major languages would not only help new

---

[54]This is ironic if we know that Gallimard, the venerable French publishing house, published Denise Masson's French translation of the Qur'an as early as 1968.

writers like Alaa al-Aswany rise to prominence globally, but also bring fame to writers of the older generation.[55] In this regard a sociological approach to translation has proved instructive and enlightening.

It is not difficult to envision some of the ways in which Arabic literature could gain a wider readership in the West, but to what extent could translation studies play a role? We still need to widen the range of our research tools to integrate other aspects of the translation act. More research on linguistically- and culturally-specific dynamics between local writers and global markets and publics would be valuable. The scope of translation studies can be broadened by taking the myriad elements that influence the act of translation into account more systematically. The potential of the Bourdieusian framework is of astonishing scope and vision in this respect. Shifting the concepts of habitus, symbolic capital and other sociological concepts to centre-stage might inspire more research. Even with the recent focus on translators that has characterized the sociological turn, we still need to open up new avenues of investigation in human-based research. Besides the translators and publishers dealt with in this thesis, we might also explore the role of scouts, editors and any other operators involved in the different stages of production, distribution and consumption of books as a cultural product**.**

In terms of its critical thinking, translation studies could further explore the underlying factors and investigate the repercussions of importing a particular author or a certain kind of literature. Much of Arabic fiction comprising the recent wave of translations is so familiar and judgemental in a troublesome way, that the decision to translate them can

---

[55] I still remember how almost all the students in my secondary school class in Morocco knew Gabriel Garcia Marquez because they read his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in Arabic translation.  I also read Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* before I could read a single word of English. These are concrete examples of how translation plays a pivotal role in the internationalization of  writers.

hardly be said to be introducing anything new to the Western understanding of Eastern cultures. Besides depicting women as either young and arousing desire or old and therefore no longer desirable,  Alaa al-Aswany's novel, also describes Egyptians - and by implication all people of the region- as incredibly submissive and not likely to be roused or fired up with corruption and injustice.

> Our Lord created the Egyptians to accept government authority. No Egyptian can go against his government. Some peoples are excitable  and rebellious by nature but the Egyptian keeps his head down his whole life long so he can eat. It says so in the history books. The Egyptians are the easiest people in the world to rule. The moment you take power, they submit  to  you and grovel to you and you can do what you want with them.

Representation of the Other, reflected in this passage, has been a determining factor in importation of non-Western literatures. In addition to contextualizing the work in terms of the structures and conditions that have surrounded it, we could also investigate the role these translations have played in constructing the Western imaginary. The question of re-considering these fossilized images is even more pertinent today. After the Arab Spring which has thankfully branded many old assertions as untrue, to adopt the same old criteria and to promote the translation of works celebrating insulation from the present social and political reality of the region can only be viewed as a shortcoming.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Corpora

Al-Aswany, Alaa  (2005 [2002]), *'Imarat Ya'qoubian'*(The Yacoubian Building). Cairo, Maktabat Madbouli (initially published with the AUC).

Al-Aswany, Alaa (2006 [2004]), *The Yacoubian Building*, Trans. Davies Humphrey. New York, Harper Perennial.

Al-Aswany, Alaa (2006), *L'immeuble Yacoubian*, Trans. Gauthier Gilles. Paris, Actes Sud.

### Secondary Sources

### ● Theoretical Books and Articles

Allen, Roger (2000), ″Najib Mahfūz 1911- Egyptian Novelist and Short-story Writer.″ In Classe Olive ed. *Encyclopaedia of Literary Translation into English*. London/Chicago, Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, pp.890-892.

Altoma, Salih J. (2005), *Modern Arabic Literature in Translation: a Companion.* London, Saqi.

Altoma, Salih J. & Bray Julia (2000), ″Arabic: Literary Translation into English″. In Classe Olive ed. *Encyclopaedia of Literary Translation into English*. London/Chicago,  Fitzroy Dearborn publishers. pp.62-71.

Baker, Mona ed. (2010), *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*. London/New York, Routledge.

Baker, Mona ed. (1998, 2001), *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies.* London/New York, Routledge.

Barthes, Roland (1989 [1984])*, The Rustle of Languages*, Trans. Howard, Richard. University of California Press.

Bensoussan, Albert (1990), ″Traduire l'étranger″. In Meta, vol. 35. No 3, pp. 597-601.

Berman, Antoine (1989),″La Traduction et ses Discours″. *Meta*, vol. 34, no 4, pp. 672-79.

_____(1995), *Pour une Critique des Traductions: John Donne*. Paris, Gallimard.

Bielsa, Esperanza (2011) ″Some Remarks on the Sociology of Translation: A reflection on the Global Production and Circulation of Sociological Works″. *European Journal of Social Theory,* 14: 199, pp. 199-215.

Bourdieu, Pierre (2008),″ A Conservative Revolution in Publishing″. Translation Studies, 1:2, pp. 123-153.

_____ (2000), *Pascalian Meditations*, Trans. Richard Nice.  Cambridge, Polity Press.

_____ (1989),˝ Social Space and Symbolic Power˝. *Sociological Theory*, vol. 7, No.1, pp. 123-153.

_____ (1986),˝ Habitus, Code et Codification˝. *Actes de la Recherche en Science Sociales*, Vol. 64, pp. 123-153.

_____ (1977), ˝ La Production de la Croyance ˝. In *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, vol. 13, pp. 3-43.

Büchler, Alexandra & Guthrie, Alice (2011) ˝Literary Translation from Arabic into English in The United Kingdom and Ireland, 1990-2010˝. In *Making Literature Travel Series of Reports on Literary Exchange, Translation and Publishing,* September 2011.

Buzelin, Hélène (2007),˝ Translations in the Making ˝. In Wolf, Michaela ed., *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company, pp. 135-170.

Casanova, Pascale (2002) ˝Consécration et Accumulation de Capital Littéraire : la Traduction Comme Échange Inégal˝. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales,* 2002/2, pp. 7-20.

_____ (2004) *The World Republic of Letters*, Trans. MB DeBevoise. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

Chesterman, Andrew (2009) ˝The Name and Nature of TranslatOR Studies˝. *Journal of Language and Communication Studies* 42, pp. 13–22.

_____(2007),˝Bridge Concepts in Translation Sociology˝. In Wolf, Michaela ed., *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company, pp.171-183.

_____ (2006),˝Questions in the Sociology of Translation˝. In Duarte J. F. et al, *Translation Studies at the Interface of Disciplines*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company, pp. 9-27.

Coldiron, A.E.B. (2000), ˝ Comparative Literature and Literary Translation˝. In Classe Olive ed. *Encyclopaedia of Literary Translation into English*. London/Chicago, Fitzroy Dearborn publishers, pp.302-303.

Daldeniz, Elif (2010),˝Islamic Publishing Houses in Transformation: The Role of Translation˝. *Translation Studies*, 3:2, pp. 216-230.

Duarte, J. F. et al, (2006), *Translation Studies at the Interface of Disciplines*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company.

Genette, Gérard & Maclean, Marie (1991), ˝ Introduction to the paratext ˝. In *New Literary History*, vol. 22 no.2, pp.261-272.

Gentzler, Edwin (1993), *Contemporary Translation Theories*. London/New York, Routledge.

Gile, Daniel et al, (2010), *Why Translation Studies Matters.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company.

Gouanvic, J.-M. (2007),˝Objectivation, Réflexibilité et Traduction˝. In Wolf, Michaela ed., *Constructing a Sociology of Translation.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company, pp.79-92.

_____ (2007), *Sociologie de la Traduction : le Roman Réaliste Américain dans l'Espace Culturel Français*, *1920-1960.* Arras, Artois Presses Université.

_____ (2002) ˝The Stakes of Translation in Literary Fields˝. *Across Languages and Cultures* 3 (2), pp.79-92.

Heilbron, Johan & Sapiro, Gisèle (2002),˝La Traduction Littéraire un Objet Sociologique˝. *Acte de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 2002/2, pp. 3-5.

Heilbron, Johan (1999)˝Towards a Sociology of Translation: Book Translations as a Cultural World-System˝. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 1999/2, pp.429-444.

Ibrahim, Saad Eddine (2005) ˝Egypt's Tortured Present˝. *Foreign Policy*, No 148, pp. 78-80.

Johnson-Davies, Denys (2006) *Memoirs in Translation: a Life Between the Lines of Arabic Literature.* New York*,* The American University in Cairo Press.

Kahf, Mohja (2010),˝Packaging 'Huda': Sh'rawis's Mémoirs in the United States' Reception Environment˝. In Baker, Mona ed., *Critical Readings in Translation Studies.* London/New York, Routledge.

Lefevere, André (1992), *Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature Context.* New York, The Modern Language Association of America.

Lindqvist, Yvone (2007), ˝The Reconstruction of the Swedish Field of High Prestige Literary Translation during the 1980s and 1980s˝. In Wolf, Michaela ed., *Ubesetzen-Translating-Traduire: Towards a "Social Turn".* New Jersey, Piscataway, pp. 65-75.

Loloi, Parvin (2000), ˝ The Thousand and One Nights.˝ In Classe Olive ed. *Encyclopaedia of Literary Translation into English.* London/Chicago, Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, pp.1390-1392.

Maton, Karl (2008),˝Habitus˝. In Grenfell Michael ed., *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts.* Stocksfield, Acumen, pp. 49-65.

Meschonnic, Henri (2007), *Éthique et Politique du Traduire*. Lagrasse, Éditions Verdier.

Munday, Jeremy (2008 [2001]), *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications.* London /New York, Routledge.

Noureddine, Nahed Nadia (2006), ˝ Traduction dans le Monde Arabe : Histoire et Influences˝. *Translation Studies in the New Millenium,* pp. 111-122

Owen, Jean (1957) ˝The Polls and Newspaper Appraisal of the Suez Reviewed Work˝. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 350-354.

Paloposki, Outi (2009)˝Limits of Freedom: Agency, Choice and Constraints in the Work of the Translator˝. In John Milton & Paul Bandia (eds): *Agents of Translation*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 189–208.

Prunč, Erich (2007),˝Priests, Princes and Pariahs. Constructing the Professional Field˝.In Wolf, Michaela ed., *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company, pp. 39-56.

Ruano, R.M. (2006),˝ Conciliation of Disciplines and Paradigms: a Challenge and a Barrier for Future Directions in Translation Studies˝. In Duarte, J.F. ed., *Translation Studies at the Interface of Disciplines*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company, pp 43-53.

Robinson, Douglas (1997), *Western Translation Theory,* Manchester, St. Jerome Publishing.

Sapiro, Gisele (2008)˝Translation and the Field of Publishing˝. *Translation Studies*, 1:2, pp.154-166.

Simeoni, Daniel (1998),˝The Pivotal Status of the Translator's Habitus˝. In Target10:1 pp.1-39.

Snell-Hornby, Mary (2006), *The Turns of Translation Studies*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company.

Venuti, Lawrence (2008 [1995]), *The Translator's Invisibility: a History of Translation.* London /New York, Routledge.

Wolf, Michaela ed. (2007), *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company.

● **Websites, Magazines and Newspaper Articles**

Anonymous ˝ Award-wining Arabic-English Translator Humphrey Davies speaks at AUC˝. *Al Bawaba* 10 Feb 2010. ABI/INFORM Trade & Industry, ProQuest. Web. 21 Nov. 2010

Anonymous ˝ Why Doesn't Humphrey Davies Translate more Arab Women? ˝. *Wordpress.* Web. 29 Nov. 2010.

Aspden, Rachel (2007) ̏ Sex and the City Egyptian Style: a Controversial Bestseller Offers a Lurid Snapshot of Cairo ̋. *Observer Review Book Pages* Web. 31 Oct 2010.

Ermileno, Louisa (2008) ̏ The Sinbad of Literature ̋. *Publishers Weekly.* Web. 31 Oct 2010.

Lindsey, Ursula ̏ Crossing the Language Divide ̋. *Almasry Al Youm.* 11 Feb 1010. Web 30 Nov.2010

Lynx, Qualey M. ̏ The Humphrey Davies interview ̋. *The Quarterly Conversation* 07 Dec. 2010. Web. 21 Nov. 2010.

MacKinnon, Mark ̏ Author not Ready to Quit his Job ̋. *Globe & Mail  Toronto Canada* 17 June 2008: A16. Gale Opposing Viewpoints in Context. Web 18 Nov.2010

Merrit, Stephanie ̏ An author with Bite ̋. *The Observer* (London England) 9 Sept. 2007: 26. Web 31 Oct. 2010.

Moorehead, Caroline ̏ All Human Life is There ̋. *Spectator* 17 Feb. 2007. *Gale Opposing Viewpoints.* Web 18 Nov. 2010.

Sabeur, Amina ̏ L'Egypt Moderne selon gilles Gauthier, de Yacoubian à Chicago ̋. Culture & Cie Website. 21 Nov. 2010.