

2 Introduction

2.1 Literary translation in the British Isles – the wider context

Unlike in other European countries, translation does not form a natural part of literary life in the UK and Ireland – with the exception of translation between English and the autochthonous minority languages spoken here. Despite the fact that the British and Irish publishing industry is one of the most productive in Europe, with an average annual output of around 120,000-130,000 books, the British Isles rank lowest in Europe when it comes to publishing translations. Also, unlike in the rest of Europe, no institution collects data on published translations, making it impossible to establish the exact number and percentage that translated literature represents. The recent report on barriers to literary translation in the English-speaking world estimates that 1.5-2% of all books published in the UK are translations or around 2,500 per year, and that far fewer are literary translations.³ This is in sharp contrast with the numbers of translations published in European countries, where in smaller countries such as the Czech Republic, Finland, Estonia and Slovenia translations represented 20-30% of all published new titles over the period between 1990 - 2005, while France and Germany had a translation output of 10-15% over the same period.⁴

The reasons for the low level of interest in translated literature on the part of English-language publishers and the reading public at large has been the subject of much speculation and discussion. In general, several factors are seen as contributing to the perceived cultural insularity and attitude of indifference towards translated literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Some of the key reasons cited are the international hegemony of the English language; the low value placed on learning foreign languages; and Britain's cultural imperialist tradition of exporting rather than importing cultural products, particularly when it comes to books and literature. The colonial cultural legacy has another relevant dimension, of course, whereby writing from the "periphery" – Anglophone authors from India, Africa and the Caribbean – has achieved considerable international success in recent decades, if not quite displacing the "centre" then certainly quenching its thirst for the exotic without any translation having to be undertaken. Books by immigrants writing in English have, to a lesser extent, met these same needs, outside of any significant tradition of translation into English. Another reason often given for the dearth of literary translation in the UK and Ireland is that of "self-sufficiency": the literature published here is of a high standard, at the literary end, of high commercial value at the bestseller end, and amply satisfies the needs of a wide range of readers, as well as constituting an important export article.

Publishing translations in the United Kingdom and Ireland is therefore a specialist activity catering to a niche readership, undertaken mainly by small publishers concentrated in England and particularly in London, who are largely dependent on public subsidies from both UK funding sources and from source-

³ *Research into Barriers to Translation and Best Practices*, conducted by Dalkey Archive Press for the Global Translation Initiative, March 2011, available in pdf at www.dalkeyarchive.com

⁴ *Publishing translations in Europe, Trends 1990-2005*, Literature Across Frontiers, 2010. Available in pdf at www.lafpublications.org and www.lit-across-frontiers.org

language institutions and grants programmes. It is with the encouragement, support and work of arts bodies such as the Arts Council England and the British Council, and thanks to the work of organisations such as the British Centre for Literary Translation, English PEN, Literature Across Frontiers, the Translators Association and others, that the profile of literary translation has become more prominent and literary events have become more international in the true sense of the word. There are also several recent initiatives which have given the literary scene an international dimension: one of them is the setting up of the Free Word Centre, the first “literature house” in London; another is the Literary Translation Centre established at the London Book Fair in 2010 by a consortium of organisations, including those mentioned above, and with support from Arts Council England and the Gulbenkian Foundation. There are also several new festivals with a determinedly international focus – English PEN’s Free the Word! is one of them. The established British literary festivals, the most prominent of which are the Edinburgh International Book Festival, Cheltenham Literature Festival and the Telegraph Hay Festival, have a moderate international content, with Hay focusing on prominent international authors and bestsellers, while Edinburgh adopts a more open-minded and non-commercial policy in its international programming. The Manchester Literature Festival, established in 2005, is another notable exception, as are the leading poetry festivals, The Ledbury Poetry Festival and the Stanza Festival in St Andrews.

2.2 Translation of Arabic literature in the British Isles

This report examines the situation of Arabic literature in translation in the UK and Ireland from 1990 to 2010, touching on patterns of translation, publication, dissemination and reception, identifying areas where further research is needed, highlighting key matters of concern or enquiry, and making recommendations for further action. For the purposes of this report, unless otherwise specified, the frame of reference and the language term ‘English’ refers to the UK and Ireland and not the US or the anglophone world at large. In investigating Arabic literary translation, we are excluding completely from our study the large volume of Arabic religious texts, including the Holy Quran, the hadith and religious commentary, which constituted some of the very first Arabic writing to be rendered into English. Whilst it would clearly be a rich area for research, it lies outside the scope of the present study, as it is translated, published and marketed within a different context to that examined here.

2.2.1 Early Arabic literature

Oral Arabic literature is known to have been culturally significant since at least 500 AD, and the first poems were written down not long before the Holy Quran, towards the end of the seventh century. There was an important translation movement into Arabic from Hellenic, Syrian, Pahlavi, and Sanskrit works under the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258), along with translations from Arabic into Latin and other European languages. The golden age of Al-Andalus, centred on Granada and Córdoba, is also famous for the culture of international exchange and translation into and out of Arabic it fostered. After the fall of Al-Andalus and the subsequent widespread suppression of Arabic culture in Europe there was a marked decline in European translations out of Arabic, and it was only from the early eighteenth century that, very gradually, this began to change, partly as a result of European colonial involvement in the region. Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, fuelled by orientalist interest rather than literary

appreciation, versions of the Quran were translated into English, along with poetry and *The Thousand and One Nights*.

2.2.2 Arabic literary translation in the twentieth century

The twentieth century was an exciting period in Arabic literature, witnessing the shift towards fiction and away from poetry for the first time in the language's history. This involved the birth of the Arabic novel, the development of the short story and of modern Arabic drama, and a wide variety of literary experimentation. However, the international literary community missed out on these developments at the time, as international demand for and interest in Arabic literature in translation was considerably sparse until Naguib Mahfouz was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988. Before this point, as many scholars have noted⁵, there was a powerfully pervasive orientalist notion that modern Arabic literature was compromised in terms of maturity, and irrelevant to outsiders. It was seen, in the main, as only having worth as social documentary, rather than as literature *per se*. It can be argued that this notion is still at large, influencing the selection of titles for translation into English, as we shall see further, and the distinguished translator and literary scholar Marilyn Booth has coined the term 'orientalist ethnographicism' for this phenomenon. This tendency may well skew the selection of literary works for the international audience to some extent, but for the first half of the twentieth century it almost completely prevented their translation at all. Literature was afforded, at best, a marginal status within Oriental and Middle East studies, and – as the translators of the period can testify – it was almost impossible to find a publisher willing to take on an Arabic book in translation.

Consequently, according to S.J. Altouma, between 1947 and 1967 there were probably only sixteen Arabic books translated into English. This was the period in which the legendary Arabist and tireless champion of Arabic literary translation Denys Johnson Davies was working to open up the field, collecting and translating two volumes of short stories, for which he then spent several years finding a publisher. It was also the period in which the very first Naguib Mahfouz novel appeared in English (*Midaq Alley*, 1966, translated by Trevor LeGassick).

Things began to change from the late 1960s: from this point, through the 1970s and 1980s, there was a gradual but crucial expansion in academic interest in Arabic literature. The literary scholarship this new interest produced helped to gain a degree of respect and legitimacy for Arabic literature as an art form, beyond its supposed function as a social document. A healthier number of translations began to appear in English – according to S.J. Altouma around sixty novels and forty anthologies were published between 1968 and 1988. Denys Johnson Davies's task in finding publishers was slowly becoming less torturous, and he translated around ten novels and anthologies during this period. With a few notable exceptions, the writing finally emerging in translation was still, in those days, largely from Egypt, while the richness and diversity of the rest of the Arab world was being overlooked. This tendency was of course linked to the historical colonial ties between Egypt and Britain, as well as Egypt's pan-Arab cultural dominance in other arenas, notably film. The rise of international and academic feminism in the later part of this period

⁵ For example Trevor LeGassick, Sahih J. Altouma

gradually provoked an interest in Arab women writers, so that during the 1980s Nawal Saadawi, Hanan al-Shaykh and others began to appear in English (often translated by female translators).

The last twenty years

Mahfouz's Nobel Prize award in 1988 heralded the start of a new era of gradually increasing anglophone and international interest, and the period our study focuses on begins with what Roger Allen calls 'some kind of heyday' in the publication of contemporary Arabic literature. 'The award of the Nobel Prize in Literature to an Arab author was seen by many, particularly in the Arab world region itself, as a significant gesture to recognize (at last, one might say) a literary tradition whose pre-modern heritage had long been acknowledged as an enormous influence on Western genres, but whose modern creativity had been substantially neglected or rather completely overlooked.'⁶ As we shall see, this 'striking departure from the earlier phases', as Altouma calls it, involved not only the much more frequent, regular and varied translations of Arabic literature, but the involvement of many more publishers in the process. So for the first time, during the 1990s, major commercial publishers and university presses began translating and promoting Arabic fiction. At last, the geographical demographic of the translated authors began to diversify, with 'Abd al-Rahman Munif and Hanan al-Shaykh being published by major British publishers. At the same time, Saqi and Quartet Books began to emerge as important independent publishers of Arabic writing in translation during the 1990s.

The events of September 2001 lead to a surge of interest in the Arab world, reflected in everything from Arabic provision and uptake at universities to a growing interest in and consumption of Arabic cultural product. In the UK, the British Council and Arts Council England followed the trend with an increased support for initiatives aimed at bringing Arab literature closer to the UK reading public: Arts Council England funded translations from Arabic as part of their provision for publishers, and a UK publishing delegation visited the Cairo Book Fair in anticipation of the Arab World being the market focus at the London Book Fair and the UK being the guest of honour at the Cairo Book Fair. In 2009 the two organisations jointly ran a landmark Arabic-English literary translation workshop in Cairo and supported Beirut 39, a project of the Hay Telegraph Festival which selected 39 Arab authors under the age of 39 whose work was translated in a Bloomsbury anthology of the same name. Latest initiatives by the British Centre for Literary Translation have introduced Arabic in its Summer School for translators and in its mentorship scheme started in 2010.

Yet, translation from Arabic and translation in general is almost entirely dependent on subsidies and this situation is seen by many to constitute a serious threat to dissemination of Arabic literature in English, as it means that everything from the selection of titles to be translated, to the way they are translated and marketed, is potentially being dictated by the economics of translation and the commercial imperative which rules the publishing industry. At the same time and rather paradoxically, a region with some of the richest nation states in the world, and with such an intense need to be understood by the rest of the

⁶ Allen, Roger, Introduction to Translation Review special issue Translating Arabic Literature, 65, (2003), 1 – 7.

global community, is investing virtually nothing in the international promotion and translation of its literature.

2.2.3 Linguistic and literary issues of note

Not all Arab authors write in Arabic: not only are many North African writers francophone, but there is a growing Arabic literary diaspora writing and publishing in various languages, including Arabic. The remit of this study excludes Arab writers working in any language other than Arabic, even if translated into English. In the UK there is a small but significant community of Arab writers, some of whom are writing in Arabic and some in English. The issue of whether or not these writers are seen (or see themselves) as being part of the British literary scene, and how they are treated by the arts industry as a result, is one that demands further investigation. Furthermore, this may directly contribute to the phenomenon of many of the UK-based Arab writers being published in the USA, although, as we shall see, it must be born in mind that much of the Arabic literature translated into English is published by North American publishers in general. However, arts funding in the British Isles is not finding its way to the locally based Arab creative diaspora, either in terms of support for individual writers or for the translation of their work.

3 Publishing

3.1 Towards a bibliography of published translations

Other than the bibliography in Salih J Altouma's *Modern Arabic Literature in Translation: A Companion*, (London: Saqi, 2005), which only goes as far as 2003, there is no publicly accessible bibliography of Arabic literature in English. Both WorldCat and UNESCO's *Index Translationum* are partly useful, but both have shortcomings for this purpose: WorldCat searches produce data not relevant to the UK/Irish context, while *Index Translationum* does not contain comprehensive UK data, as there is currently no institution collecting data on translations published in the United Kingdom.⁷ There is a potential need, therefore, for a reliable mechanism to be set up to collect data on the publication of translations in the UK and Ireland, which would in turn supply data to *Index Translationum*.

In our attempt to compile a bibliography of literary works translated from Arabic and published in the British Isles during the period 1990 - 2010, we have used *The British National Bibliography*, as the most reliable source for the task. Whilst it contains quite a number of titles that appear to be foreign publications, their inclusion in the *BNB* is considered by librarians to make them count as UK books with respect to distribution and availability (for example titles published by the American University in Cairo Press). Whilst the distinction between US and UK publishers and distributors is important given that our scope is UK/Ireland only, many US titles are in fact available here as readily as titles published in the UK and Ireland, as we shall see in more detail later.

⁷ The British Library is listed as the UK partner – and presumably supplier of data – to *Index Translationum*, but there is no evidence that the Library is in fact collecting such data in the same way its counterparts do in other countries.

There are, however, several drawbacks in relying on the *BNB*: the complexity of the Dewey classification system makes for a time-consuming and laborious extraction of records, and titles are sometimes misclassified. Also, as the *BNB* includes pre-publication records, some of the listed books may not eventually be published in the year for which they had been planned or their publication may be cancelled altogether.

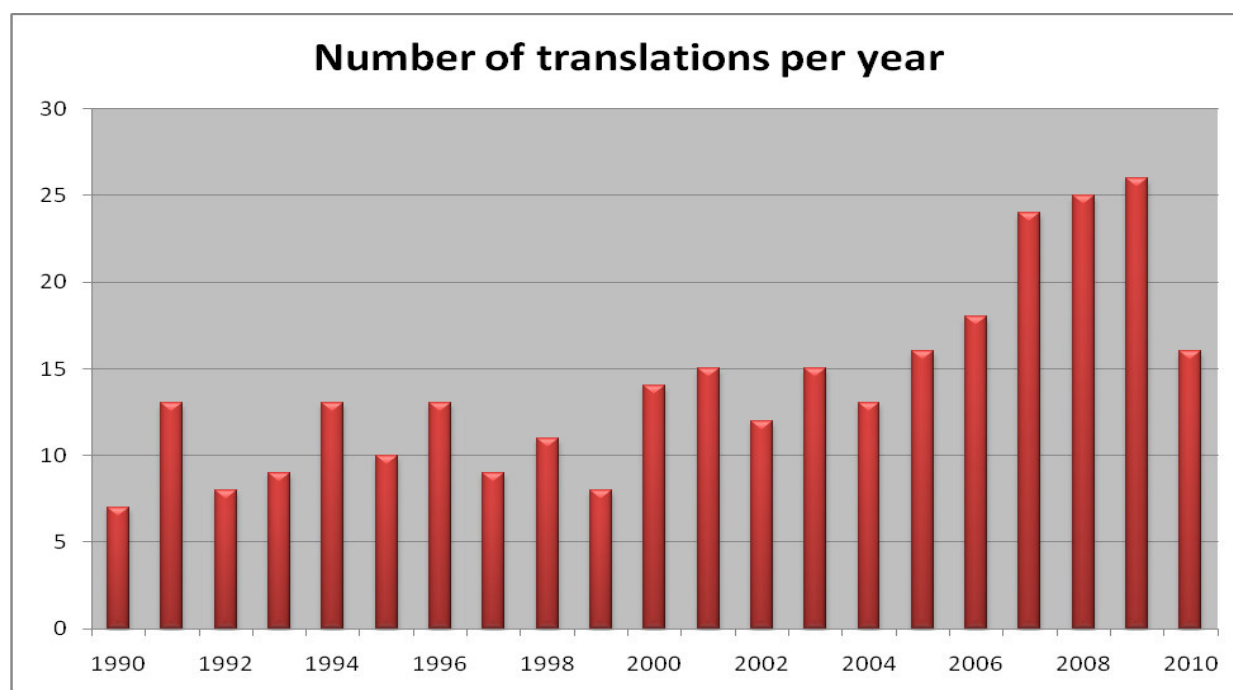
Literature translated from Arabic published during the period 1990 - 2010

The data gathered from the *BNB* suggest that close to 300 titles in the category of literature (fiction, short stories, essays, memoirs, poetry) were published in the last two decades, including 108 titles published by AUCP in Cairo which are distributed in the UK. Translations from Arabic show a clear upward trend, reaching over twenty titles per year in the second half of the current decade. (Not all titles to be published in 2010 had been recorded at the time of writing, so it is possible that there may in fact have been close to or over 30 titles published.)

Table 1. Number of translations from Arabic into English per year (2010 figures incomplete)

Year	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
Number of translations	7	13	8	9	13	10	13	9	11	8	14	15	12	15	13	16	18	24	25	26	16

Table 2. Translations from Arabic into English, 1990 - 2010



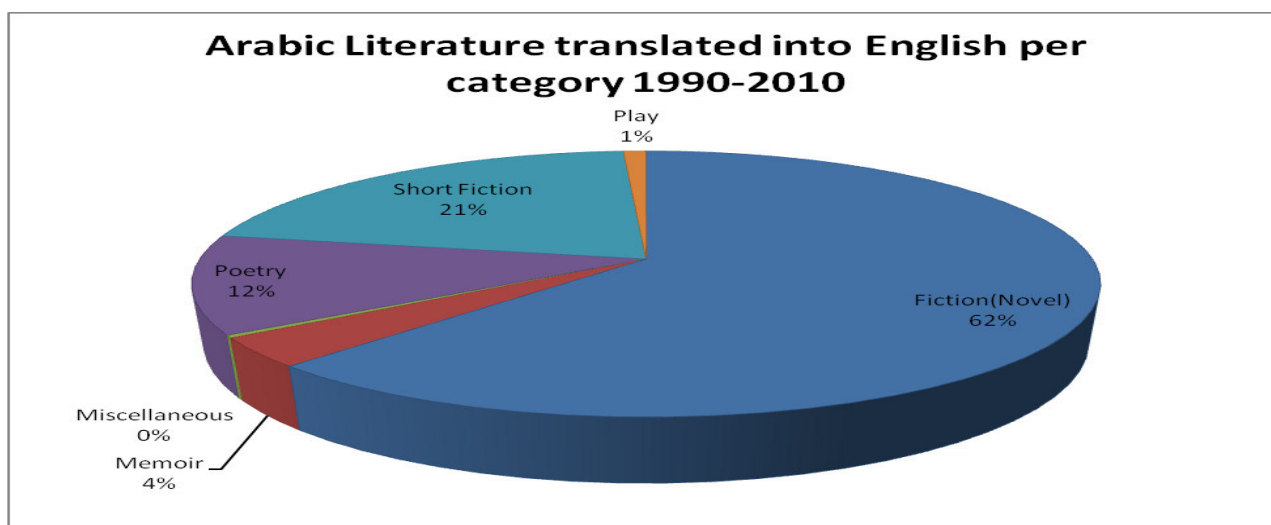
3.1.1 What is published?

The leading genre is the novel, followed by short stories and poetry. Our bibliography lists 192 novels, 65 collections of short stories (including various anthologies), 37 collections of poetry, and 11 memoir titles. Only 3 books containing theatre plays are recorded.

Table 3. Arabic Literature translated into English per category, 1990-2010

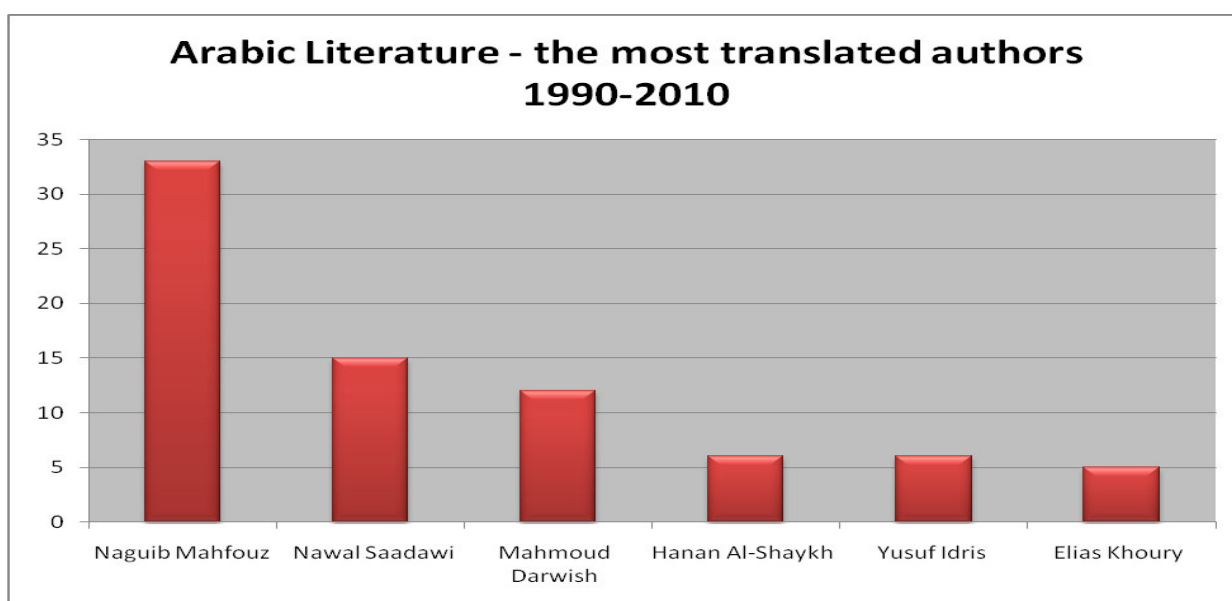
Fiction (Novel)	Memoir	Miscellaneous	Poetry	Short Fiction	Plays
192	11	1	37	65	3

Table 4. Arabic Literature translated into English per category, 1990-2010



The most translated author is Naguib Mahfouz with 33 books, followed by Nawal El Saadawi, with 15 books.

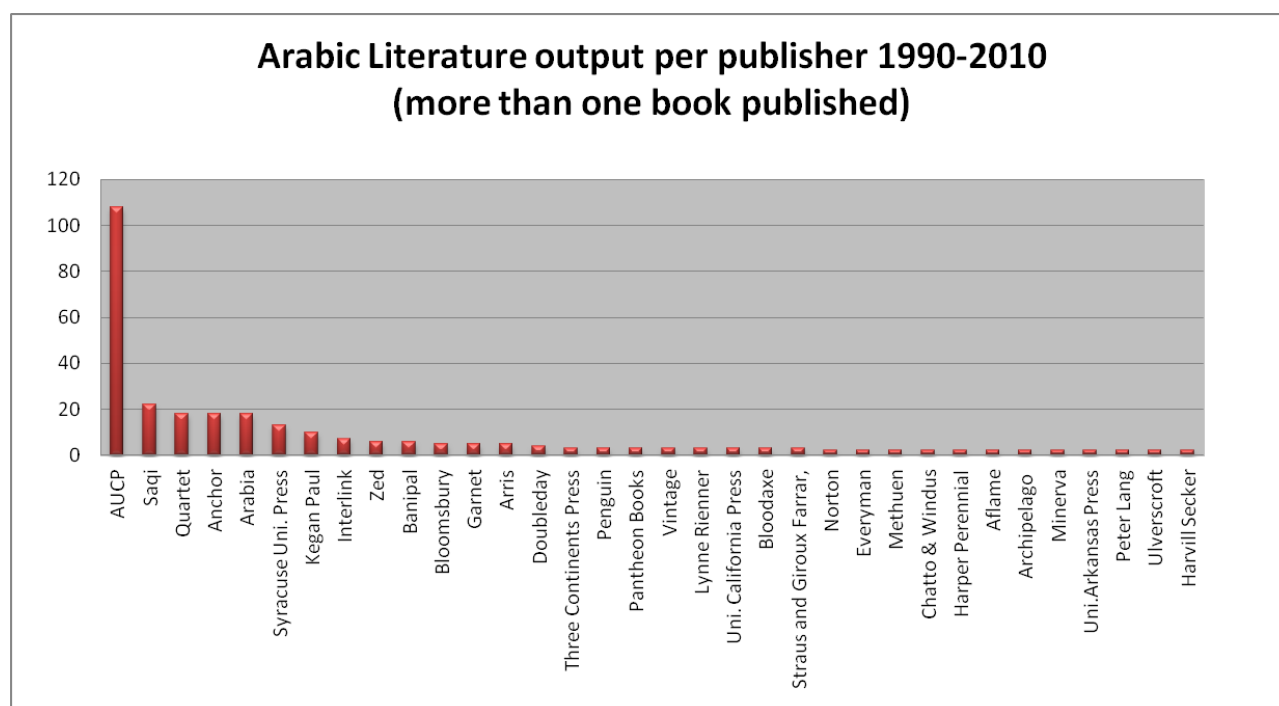
Table 5. The most translated authors 1990-2010



3.1.2 Publishers, magazines, websites

Translation tends to be a specialist activity in the UK book market and translation from Arabic is no exception. While the American University in Cairo Press is clearly a leader in the field with their policy of systematic publication of contemporary Arabic literature in English translation, there are a handful of UK-based publishers who specialize in publishing translations from Arabic, and these are profiled below. The remaining publishers are those who have an international list but have published only one or two titles translated from Arabic. Re-editions and reprints by multiple publishers have been counted once against the first publisher.

Table 6. Arabic literature in translation into English: output per publisher



Profiles of publishers

3.1.3 Banipal Magazine of Modern Arab Literature

Banipal Magazine publishes contemporary Arab authors in English translation, no matter where they are writing and publishing. An independent magazine, *Banipal's* three issues a year present both established and emerging Arab writers in English for the first time through poems, short stories or excerpts from novels. It also includes occasional columns of a literary influences feature, a travelling tale, and an interview with a publisher or editor, plus author interviews, book reviews and photo-reports of literary events. Each issue has a main theme, as well as being illustrated throughout with author photographs, and the full-colour covers often feature prominent Arab artists. (From *Banipal's* website www.banipal.co.uk.)

Banipal occupies a central and crucial position in the field of Arabic literature in English translation and in the field of publishing translated literature in the UK in general, being the only magazine which has systematically kept a finger on the pulse of the literary life of an entire region for over a decade.

Established in 1998, it had published 39 issues by the end of 2010, creating a groundbreaking forum for emerging writers and translators, and serving as an invaluable resource allowing UK publishers to access a wealth of writing from the Arab world. The magazine's influence on the rest of the publishing industry in terms of selecting who is translated and promoted cannot be overstated. *Banipal* serves as a primary source of Arabic literature for anyone who cannot read Arabic, well beyond the native English-language readership, and as such its influence (and its responsibility) is phenomenal. *Banipal*'s public events – individual launches and readings, as well as extensive tours and collaborative events at the London Book Fair – are also widely praised among writers and their translators. In addition to all this, *Banipal* has published several books (see bibliography), and the Banipal Literary Trust administers the annual Saif Ghobash-Banipal Prize for Arabic Translation. Issues of the magazine usually have a particular focus, such as the literature of a specific country or region, or a section of the diaspora, and tribute issues to individual writers. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that *Banipal*'s activity is achieved by a very small team and on an extremely limited budget – although a recipient of Arts Council funding, this is an operation that runs on the founders' passionate dedication to the cause of promoting Arabic literature to English readers.

Banipal is however also sometimes seen in Arabic to English translation circles as suffering from uneven translation and editorial quality. It must be emphasized here that translation quality is an issue of concern in the field overall and that this is not unique to *Banipal*. Also, the editorial team's strong influence over which Arab writers gain international exposure and attention, and are therefore eventually translated and published, means that their choices are inevitably the subject of scrutiny.

Website: <http://www.banipal.co.uk/>

3.1.4 American University in Cairo Press

Although AUCP is not a UK-based press, it holds a unique position in the field of publishing contemporary Arabic fiction in English translation, as its titles are distributed here by Haus Arabia Books, and are included in the *British National Bibliography*. Celebrating its 50th birthday this year, the AUCP boasts a list consisting of some 1,000 titles including academic works, travel literature and other non-fiction. According to AUCP's Associate Director for Editorial Programmes Neil Hewison, around 150 of these are literary translations, all of which are in print, around 20% being titles that AUCP have bought from other publishers and only hold the Middle East rights to. They aim to publish ten to fifteen new literary titles every year, and in some years as many as twenty are published. It is perhaps this prolific output that provokes the question as to whether the AUCP goes for quantity rather than quality in its selection. Neil Hewison refutes this claim categorically:

We try to select books carefully, on good advice. Although we publish 10 to 15 or even up to 20 a year, we would never put out books just to keep up that quota, definitely not. And of course this is all subjective, so we please some and upset others. There's no way I can say that our selection represents absolutely the best books of the year – we can only

translate a tiny drop per year from that ocean of the thousands of books which appear in Arabic.

The role of the AUCP

AUCP is a seminally important publisher of Arabic fiction in English, 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 Naguib Mahfouz, and the international bestsellers of Alaa Al Aswany.

Being Naguib Mahfouz's primary English-language publisher, as well as his worldwide agent for all translation rights, has been central to the press's development – what AUCP Director Mark Linz refers to as 'a major watershed.'⁸ AUCP's translation of Mahfouz's work prior to the award of the Nobel Prize in 1988 was seen as a significant contributing factor to his being awarded the prize. As Mahfouz himself wrote, 'it was through the translation of these novels into English [...] that other publishers became aware of them and requested their translation into other foreign languages, and I believe that these translations were among the foremost reasons for my being awarded the Nobel prize.'⁹ There are now some 500 editions in forty languages of the works of Naguib Mahfouz published or licensed by the AUC Press. The first of his novels to be translated into English was *Miramar*, in 1978, and his most translated novel is *Midaq Alley*, which has appeared in more than thirty foreign editions in fifteen languages. Given that Mahfouz's award can be said to have launched Arabic literature in translation onto the world stage, leading to a significant increase in its translation in general, the AUCP's role in the development of the genre has been pivotal. The press has continued to be the major source of Arabic literature in English worldwide, and has launched the international career of several major Arab writers.

Yet, some see the AUCP as not always being rigorous enough when it comes to translation quality, and it has been also criticized with regard to translators' rates of pay and contractual issues. A recent case involved a number of translators taking collective action to force the press to give them better contractual rights.

It must be stressed here that the AUCP's role in terms of 'bringing the literature, the culture, the story of the Middle East to those outside the Middle East,' as Linz describes it (*ibid.*), has been and continues to be hugely important, and is valued as such even by those who may be critical of the press on other counts.

As acclaimed translator and scholar of Arabic literature at Durham University Paul Starkey puts it frankly: 'AUCP – a frustrating organization to work with in some respects, and with miserable rates of pay, but still commendable in many respects, in terms of making available a body of literature that they can't really be making any money out of.'

Mahfouz sales – subsidizing other titles?

⁸ <http://www.britishcouncil.org/arts-newarabicbooks-people-interviews.htm>

⁹ As quoted by AUCP in <http://www1.aucegypt.edu/publications/auctoday/AUCTodaySpring10/AUCPress.htm>

Asked about the idea that the huge sales of Naguib Mahfouz's books and translation rights subsidizes this literary outreach work to some extent, Neil Hewison had this to say:

Not directly, no. We're a non-profit organization: we publish a range of books, some make money and some lose money. Literature — with the two exceptions of Mahfouz and al-Aswany — doesn't generate income! So if we were a commercial house we would have dropped most of our literary list years ago. As a commercial house, you just couldn't justify not making any profit on a whole section like this. The income generated by things like our picture guides to Egyptian museums, guidebooks, and books on ancient Egypt — our broad range of titles on Egypt — make money that feeds back in to support the literary side of our list. Another way we try to help fund the English edition of a novel is to negotiate a contract with the author where we acquire all the other language rights to the novel, so we can sell them off to recoup some of the costs that are otherwise lost. Because translated books are so much more expensive to produce than originals are. So in this way, we act as an agent for the author, more or less, with part of the proceeds going to the author and part to us to offset translation costs. So we do balance books, but we are not looking to make a profit. Our literature sales are not spectacular. Mahfouz and al-Aswany sell well enough, but the rest of them are done for love, and for the idea of it, the mission, really, of making Arab literature available to a wider audience, not for money.

This description of AUCP as a publisher with a non-commercial interest in the promotion of Arabic literature is reminiscent of the common US publishing model — exemplified by university presses which specialize in translations, such as Northwestern University Press, or university-based presses such as Dalkey Archive or Open Letter Press — which is uncommon in the UK where publishers operate on a commercial basis with the support of arts funding bodies or books councils. Unlike in the UK, the existence of these presses in the US enables a wider range of less commercial translated literature to be published. Noble as this way of operating sounds, it does however prompt the question: how does this model compare to a commercial one? It seems that the only way mainstream corporate publishers can feel comfortable taking on Arabic literature in translation is for them to turn to very marketable types of material, an assumption that causes widespread concern. Is non-profit or publicly subsidized publishing the only viable model for quality literature in translation? It seems that in the Arab world, this model (foundation-based or university-based publishing) is the only one that has so far brought systematic benefits in an environment relatively free from commercial pressures. But is this polarization of a cultural industry healthy? Is there a middle way? If the middle way is represented by medium-sized presses like Saqi and Haus Arabia, which need some subventions to be able to continue selecting work on the basis of literary quality, but are also relatively commercially viable, then arguably their funding should be prioritized.

Website: <http://www.aucpress.com>

3.1.5 Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing

This is an important initiative, of which many people in the industry have high hopes: it is seen as well-funded, well-run, well-intentioned, and — crucially — it is a joint operation between Arab and British professionals. Established in October 2008 with headquarters in Doha, BQFP is owned by the Qatar

Foundation and managed by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. Their stated main aims are: to publish books of excellence and originality in English and Arabic; to promote the love of reading and writing, and help establish a vibrant literary culture in Qatar and the Middle East; and to achieve the transfer of publishing and related skills into Qatar – implying a commitment to improving standards of translation into and out of Arabic.

So far, BQFP has approached the first of these aims by starting an interesting list including fiction and non-fiction for adults and for children, educational books for schools, academic books for universities and researchers, and information and reference titles. In 2010 they announced the translation and publication of a work by Ahmed Khaled Tawfiq, the Arab world's best-selling science fiction writer. Described by BQFP as 'a grim futuristic account of Egyptian society in 2023', it is a bestseller across the Arab world, having been reprinted three times, and as such the decision to translate this book is a refreshing change. Whilst looking like a commercial choice rather than an elite intellectual one, it clearly does not conform to the worst type of stereotypes that some commercial publishers are seen as embracing, such as the 'memoir fixation' or 'unveiling of the Arab woman' model often seen in choices by corporate publishers.

The second aim is valuable in our context because of its potential to alleviate some of the problems experienced by the UK translator or publisher dealing with a largely unedited Arabic source text for translation, as discussed elsewhere in this study, as well as its potential to nurture and develop new writing talent in the Arab world, where resources for professional development of writers are scarce, and it is encouraging indeed to see BQFP establishing literary and translation events, as well as creative writing workshops.

Achieving their third aim involves, promisingly, 'regular internships and secondments in Doha and at Bloomsbury's headquarters in London, training courses in key areas of publishing, and mentoring of aspiring Qatari publishers.' In terms of improving translation quality, the first concrete step was to hold the inaugural annual BQFP International Translation Conference in May 2010 in Doha, in partnership with Carnegie-Mellon University Qatar. Consisting of workshops and plenary sessions with translators at various stages of their careers, BQFP state that the conference 'is designed to create a Gulf-based platform to discuss issues related to translation at both the theoretical and practical level.'

Website: <http://www.bqfp.com.qa/>

3.1.6 Saqi Books

Saqi was founded in 1984 with the stated aim of 'printing quality academic and general interest books on the Middle East.' Since then Saqi has expanded its network to include writers from all over the world, but is still widely known as a publisher of Arabic literature, and as a press that has often reflected progressive trends – it was amongst the first in the 1980s to publish feminist works on women and Islam, such as Fatima Mernissis' *Beyond the Veil*. Its Beirut sister company Dar al-Saqi is a respected publisher of literature from across the Arab world; UK Saqi is therefore sometimes able to translate books to which Dar

al-Saqi hold the translation rights and which they might not have afforded otherwise – essential in the current economic climate and given the realities of arts funding.

Website: <http://www.saqibooks.com/>

3.1.7 Haus Arabia Books

Launched in 2008, the Haus Arabia Books imprint was originally a joint venture between Haus Publishing and Arcadia Books, acquiring most of its fiction from the AUCP and also acting as AUCP's exclusive UK distributor. Arcadia are now no longer involved, and Haus Arabia is now an imprint of Haus Publishing exclusively but still works very closely with AUCP and acts as a distributor for many of their titles. They are supported in selecting what they describe as 'some of the best new writing from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Algeria', by a panel of expert advisors in the UK, such as the literary critic and Mahfouz expert, Professor Rasheed El-Enany, director of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter. So far their list is earning praise for its quality, and there are high hopes for the development of this relative newcomer on the scene.

Website: <http://www.arabiabooks.co.uk/>

3.1.8 Garnet Publishing / Ithaca Press

Formed in the early 1990s and Lebanese owned, Garnet Publishing focuses on the Arab world. Ithaca Press, their academic imprint, has been publishing on the Middle East since the 1970s. Garnet Publishing specializes in trade books, with a particular interest in the Middle East, and publishes titles in the fields of architecture, art, fiction, cookery and travel, and also in the areas of the culture, heritage and history of the Middle East. The press has a small but distinguished list of translated Arabic fiction, including the *Great Books of Islamic Civilisation* series of literary classics.

Website: <http://www.ithacapress.co.uk/>

3.1.9 Bloomsbury Publishing

One of the highly commercial UK majors, Bloomsbury had only delved into publishing Arabic writing in translation with titles by Hanan al-Shaykh and Mourid Barghouti, until embarking on their collaboration with the Qatar Foundation in 2008, and becoming involved in the Beirut39 project. Initiated by the Hay Festival, this is a selection of 39 Arab authors under the age of 39, with an anthology featuring them published simultaneously in English and in Arabic in 2010. Translators for the project were hand-picked by the bilingual Egyptian Bloomsbury novelist Ahdaf Soueif. The anthology was funded by Arts Council England, the British Council, and the English PEN Writers in Translation programme, which caused quite a stir among the smaller publishers in the field, given that, as the publisher of JK Rowling, Bloomsbury are presumed not to be in need of public subsidy.

Website: <http://www.bloomsbury.com/>