Too many of [the books that get translated] seem to be written for Western audiences. (William Hutchins)

Now that Arabic literature is reaching a larger audience it's being more and more 'orientalized' — terrorism and the condition of women's lives, catering to the interests of the general public who're not necessarily knowledgeable about the region in terms of daily life and social conditions and cannot understand the satire, humor, narrative experimentation, and so on that writers in the region employ. (Alexa Firat)

I would emphasize the bifurcation in publishing, that there is more than one situation. There are commercial presses, small literary ones, and academic ones. They do overlap, due to the pressure to commercialise, but they are different in terms of what they look for and what they are willing to do. So anything we say has to be carefully qualified. With that in mind, then, orientalist ethnographicism is this whole focus on tell-all memoirs, especially by women; it's an iconography of the veil and stripping it off, and it has had an impact on what publishers want and will go for — exposé, basically. It builds on the longstanding focus on asking for sociology instead of literature.

Of course there's nothing wrong with the demand for sociology in itself, but it shouldn't be the main reason and criterion for a book being published, and too often it is. Publishers say 'I'm really interested in stuff from Iraq right now,' with politics as the main impetus behind that interest. So for example one learns a lot from Huda Barakat about Lebanon and about the civil war, but you are also reading an amazing novel! So this concern with documentary mustn't be the main thing! It's a memoir-fixation. There is a lot of sensationalism involved, and this emphasis presumes a kind of transparency, an accuracy. I'm optimistic on the one hand because there are more books coming out and more interest, but I'm also worried by economics over the next few years — the coming closures of publishing houses and so on.

I worry about the choices that are being made now, in the wake of things like *Girls of Riyadh*: there's more focus on — I don't want to distinguish between 'literary' and 'popular' works, but let's say things that are 'more straightforward to Anglophone audiences.' As a translator you may avoid things you know are unlikely to get taken up by a publisher, so there's an element of self-censoring in that regard. Ironically I wanted to work for Penguin [on *Girls of Riyadh*] so as to make them take on more risky Arabic stuff. (Marilyn Booth)

It is more interesting to reflect what is being published in the Arab world than to insist on only translating 'the best'. (William Hutchins)

I think there needs to be better methods of facilitating discussion between what the Arab world thinks should be translated and what the English-speaking world does. The other factor is that people like Denys Johnson-Davies have dominated in the past through force of personality/idiosyncrasy — in Denys Johnson-Davies's case he has good taste on the

whole so this isn't a problem, but more broadly there doesn't seem to be a forum to debate what should be considered for translation. I'm not arguing for centralist control but I think something more systematic would be beneficial. On the other side there are the various writers' unions and organizations in the Arab world but they may have rather staid views on what is good quality literature. Of course the general issue as to what is good is fraught, but perhaps the British Council, a special working party or something like that, or the Translators Association? (John Peate)

I see a stronger demand for contemporary work, especially if it addresses topical themes (you know, women, religion, violence etc.) but at the same time other less 'agenda-driven' works are also seeing the light of day. We need as many scouts as possible, whoever they are. (Jonathan Wright)

I am less concerned about 'uneven material . . . appearing in publication' than about the role of political pressures of all types in the choice of what is or is not published and is or is not applauded when published and by the role of cliques who 'All know the man their neighbour knows'. (William Hutchins)

The lack of Arabic editorial culture and the resulting extra work for the translator:

The most difficult work I did was probably fiction where the original was not so satisfactory or competent, and I had to choose whether to 'improve'/ edit it in English or leave it as it was. (Catherine Cobham)

I would also suggest that in some case there are issues with the way texts are produced in Arabic and in particular the way they are edited, or to be more precise not edited. This doesn't mean proof reading, but radical and robust restructuring of the text by a highly professional editor as happens in UK or USA.

I have found that most editors of the texts I have produced do a kind of proof read which improves the version in respect of language but does not add anything to the text in regard to plot, mood or characterization. I think the texts often need a much deeper reassessment by a proper editor (as above). In fact there may be a crisis in the Arab publishing world and that is the complete absence of the role of editor. (Anthony Calderbank)

Non-native Anglophones as translators:

There is also the vexed question of whether a mother-tongue Arabic speaker should translate fiction into English. I have quite often been told that only an Arab can understand Arabic well enough to translate out of the language, but I would maintain that an Arabic to English literary translator should preferably have English as his/her first language. (Catherine Cobham)

We must be careful, as knowing both languages is not enough to make you a translator. (Marilyn Booth)

I translated a piece for the last Booker nomination and it was excruciatingly difficult and I kept wondering to myself why on earth I was doing it but then the novel won and I felt glad I'd done it. Interestingly enough the author has asked for a native speaker of Arabic to translate it. He believes that a text should be translated by a native speaker of that text's language, not by a native speaker of the target language. He doesn't think a foreigner will understand the Arabic text properly. (Anthony Calderbank)

Arab world funding issues:

I don't know about it in detail, but haven't so far been impressed by such projects as the so-called Arabic Booker (the winner of which is guaranteed translation into English, as are winners of a few other such prizes around the Arab world). I think what a rich Arab government could usefully do is to fund the translation of a corpus of Arab classics into English, both mediaeval and modern (20th century, during the great rise and maturation of Arabic fiction). The problem is that many Arab writers are so disaffected from their governments that they would reject this idea, and correspondingly quite a lot of the writers whose works are promoted by Arab governments are those who toe the party line in some sense. (Catherine Cobham)

So far, I have not experienced any efforts by Arab governments that really help the cause. (William Hutchins)

Of course, they should do more. But the Saudis, Qataris and Kuwaitis have spent money on this. (Jonathan Wright)

I would say that the primary reason [for the lack of Arab funding sources] is that there is no organization either in any Arabic-speaking country or, above all, across the entire Arabic-speaking region, that is willing to take on the task of gathering in information about published works of literature. Bibliography in this context is essentially whatever any scholar working in the field happens to put together. As such it is very region-specific and reflects the scholars' (i.e. translators') knowledge and taste.

More support for translation initiatives is needed, particularly in publication; more co-operation with cultural organizations in the region itself. [Support from the Arab world is] minimal to non-existent. The concern is almost totally with translations INTO Arabic, not FROM. (Roger Allen)

There is the Arab Booker, there is Qatar Bloomsbury, Emirates Airlines International Festival of Literature, but still disappointingly little in the way of good solid funding. (Anthony Calderbank)

I would favour foundations to finance the translation of pre-modern works, which are becoming neglected. Many of the existing translations are very out of date and need updating and/or improving. (Jonathan Wright)

Quality control:

European literature had a build-up of translation and translators over generations, but with Arabic there isn't a critical mass, as the increase in interest has been so sudden. And it is in the interests of the whole Arab world to get the standards up. (Marilyn Booth)

Some more systematic form of peer review would help. (John Peate)

It requires proofreaders who are themselves literate in Arabic, and who have read the novel in question in the original language. This can help to catch errors. (Nancy Roberts)

I have myself seen some very poor translation, sloppy, not well polished, and so on. It is a hard industry to regulate with all the volunteerism and amateur ad hoc-ism. I don't get paid when I do things for *Banipal*, so I suppose it's a labour of love in many ways. That makes it harder to oversee. (Anthony Calderbank)

I wish translated Arabic literature was reviewed more widely in the press, and again for its literary qualities and not just for its content, or the 'courage' of the author in portraying such topics, etc. Reviews of Arabic literature, when they occur, are almost always fairly superficial and generally favourable, and it would be much more useful if reviewers felt able to be more analytical and critical where appropriate.'

Some [editors] have helped, although this has usually been a case of them editing the Arabic original via the English translation in circumstances where I did not feel I had the licence to do so. Some editors seem to change things for the sake of it, or more seriously, change things based on a misunderstanding of the text, as they can't generally read Arabic. However, it is always useful having somebody new come to the translated text and responding to it. (Catherine Cobham)

The importance of mentoring:

Over the years I would get comments from people on things I had done with a text that would clue me in to ways I could improve my work, and this was part of my training too. (Nancy Roberts)

I think literary translators are / should be trained by apprenticeship. I did not do my apprenticeship in person but through the published translations of Denys Johnson-Davies. For the first time ever I have a young apprentice here. He has the ability; we will see whether he really wants the glorious career. (William Hutchins)

Mentoring is so important, and could have such a positive effect: the more we can do this the better, so as to create a more heterogenous and bigger body of translators. (Marilyn Booth)

Training opportunities:

I find that workshops and gatherings where translators can come together and share thoughts and carry out tasks together (as we did in Cairo) are very useful. (Anthony Calderbank)

There's a big difference between reading a newspaper, negotiating a business deal and reading pre-Islamic poetry. Arabic is such a vast body of material, with clear distinctions chronologically, geographically and in registers, that students and teachers have to set priorities. (Jonathan Wright)

The need for academic credit to be accorded to translations, given that so many of the best literary translators are academics:

Universities regard translation as a menial activity, unworthy of proper academics. (Paul Starkey)

Literary translation is sniffed at on academic CVs. Most crucially, UK university academics who are also translators are not given credit for their translations in the way they would be for academic research. As literary translation is in many ways more arduous than writing papers and requires a considerable amount of research to do properly, it should certainly be recognized on a par with academic research. I have often been advised that for the sake of my academic career, I should stop translating altogether and do standard research. I try to combine the two, and I also think that a vital qualification for a literary translator is that he/she should be a good literary critic. (Marilyn Booth)

Rather than these values being 'deeply enshrined on old academic convention and not easily shifted' as you ask, it's since the beginning of the Research Assessment Exercise, now known as the Research Excellence Framework, which I think started in the 1980s sometime and shifts its criteria quite a lot, but has got much more hyper in the last few years. Universities get very worked up about these exercises as they are an important factor in deciding how much money they receive over the following few years, and also of course there is prestige involved. Annotated translations with critical introductions have some standing in the RAE/REF, but footnotes etc are exactly what you don't want in a translation of fiction. (Catherine Cobham)

Published translations do not count as research for academics, and therefore they cannot claim them in research assessment exercises and by extension cannot earn income or grants for the institution from them. This is to the detriment of the academic world's input into literary and other forms of translation, but I can see a rationale for this exclusion. (John Peate)

I have always been perplexed, and remain so, at the attitudes of academe, at least in the United States, and especially 'literary' colleagues therein, towards the significance of translated works at those times when scholars are subjected to institutional assessment. An activity which demands the very highest levels of linguistic competence and inter-cultural awareness can, it appears, still be downplayed in the context of an assessment of more synthetic and theoretically based research which is, more often than not, of considerably less impact than translations within the public domain. (Roger Allen (in his introduction to the *Translation Review* special edition on translating Arabic, 2003))

Insufficient pay:

Bad pay keeps standards down, making people rush, cram, work when tired; it also means work gets farmed out to translators who are not really ready to take it on yet. I think literary translators should be paid more. A lot of the faults in translations as they are now may stem from people doing them too quickly because they aren't being paid much and can't afford to spend the necessary amount of time on them. (Catherine Cobham)

No one is willing to pay a translator a fair whack for their work. If I am to work six months solid on a four hundred page novel I need six months salary and while obviously different people have different expectations as to what that might be 2, 3 or 4 thousand pounds or dollars isn't going to cover it. The challenge is how to get the translator true recompense for their task.

If literary translators were paid more then they could dedicate more of their time to the activity. It is not professionalized enough at the moment with the vast majority of people doing it in their spare time or as one part of a portfolio of activities. (Anthony Calderbank)

Whether the new younger community of translators are here to stay:

Just anecdotally, I don't think so; not people who are really serious about it and do more than a book or two. (William Hutchins)

In my own experience more people just out of university are thinking it would be a nice way of life to translate fiction, but often they give up quite soon as it's harder than they think and/or doesn't pay well. (Catherine Cobham)

All I can say is that I see new names popping up, and the British Council seminar for literary translators in Cairo clearly showed that there is a new generation of translators. I think this an excellent development. (Anthony Calderbank)

More young and female translators are coming onto the scene, and also more bilingual people, people whose first language is not English. There were only a very few 'others',

before — they were all older male and upper to middle class. I was one of the first, along with people like Catherine Cobham. (Marilyn Booth)

5.3 Language and literary translation training opportunities

UK Universities offering Arabic courses (undergraduate or postgraduate):
Middlesex University
School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
Manchester Metropolitan University
University of Westminster
University of Cambridge
London Metropolitan University
University of Edinburgh
University of St Andrews
University of Oxford
University of Leeds
University of Salford
University of Manchester
University of Exeter
Durham University

University College Dublin is the only Irish University that offers any Arabic, but this is 'Arabic for general purposes' as an elective module in the Applied Languages Centre, not a full degree course.
The UK universities listed above all offer a range of Arabic courses, from undergraduate and postgraduate degrees that are almost entirely focused on language, to those that combine Arabic with several other things, or include it only for a specific element of the course. In addition, the relevant departments in these universities allow students from other disciplines to add elective Arabic modules to their courses.

UK universities offering relevant translation courses (undergraduate or postgraduate):
Aston University
University of Bath
University of Birmingham
University of Bristol
Durham University
University of East Anglia
Heriot Watt University (Edinburgh)
University of Edinburgh
University of Essex
University of Exeter
University of Hull

University of Leeds
City University (London)
Imperial College London
London Metropolitan University
Middlesex University (London)
University College London
University of Manchester
University of Newcastle
University of Portsmouth
University of Salford
University of Sheffield
University of Surrey
University of the West of England (Bristol)
University of Wales Swansea
University of Warwick
University of Westminster, London

Irish Universities offering relevant translation courses (undergraduate or postgraduate):
Queen's University Belfast
Dublin City University National University of Ireland, Galway
University of Dublin, Trinity College University of Dublin, Trinity College

Relevance of courses
The list of universities offering translation qualifications is of course much longer. Although there are several undergraduate degrees offered in translation, they tend not to be geared to literary translation, but rather to business, technical translation, or interpretation. It is at post-graduate level that students are more able to formally train in literary translation. The dedicated undergraduate can of course use a modular degree to build a substantial amount of translation work into their Arabic BA in the UK (especially by using independent study modules to work with a supervisor on literary translation). This is rare, however. As we have heard from our literary translators here, most people working in the field have not directly or formally been trained in the practicalities of literary translation at either level. Indeed there is lively debate about whether such a thing is even really possible — whilst some translation studies scholars like to think their theory work is feeding into the practice, many literary translators dismiss it as, at worst 'an abstraction we must ignore'. (German Arabist and literary translator Hartmut Fähndrich).

Non-degree Arabic courses
In addition to the universities, there is quite an array of locations in both the UK and Ireland, even in the provinces, where Arabic can be studied part-time, as part of adult education or evening-class provision. Catering to a varied community of British Asian Muslims, Muslim converts, back-packers, ancient Egypt

fanatics, amateur linguists and so on, these classes are available even in eight locations in the Republic of Ireland, where no Arabic degrees at all are offered.

Lack of available data on student numbers

Unfortunately there is no publicly accessible database of student numbers in tertiary institutions, and none of the universities we contacted from the above lists provided figures. Anecdotally, however, the huge surge in Arabic admissions since 2001 is widely referred to by academics, staff and students in these long-established (and traditionally undersubscribed) departments. To take the University of Exeter as a case in point, then, the total Arabic language intake in October 2000 was twelve students, of which eight completed the first year. It should be stressed that this included combined honours students reading, for example, French and Arabic; students reading Islamic Studies with Arabic; a Middle East Politics MA student taking an elective Arabic module; and the few purists taking the Arabic BA. UK Arabic departments struggled to fill their courses so much in those days that they would admit students with no previous language studies beyond GCSE, which partly accounted for the high drop-out rates over the academic year. From 2002, however, the yearly intake began to more or less double, so that by 2006 that class of eight students who sat their summer exams in 2001 had been replaced by a year group divided into several classes due to numbers. The demographic of the intake changed a great deal over that period, also, with students of International Relations and Politics being increasingly drawn into Arabic language studies.

Arabic in schools

Alongside this expansion of tertiary institution Arabic teaching, there has been the expansion of Arabic at school level. Whilst still confined to the bigger multi-ethnic cities of the UK, Arabic is increasingly being offered at GCSE, A/S and A-Level (offered by CIE and EDEXCEL exam boards). According to Nadia Abdelaal of EDEXCEL, student numbers doubled between 2000 and 2001[33]. This provision and this uptake is linked to Arabic being a community language in Britain and Ireland, but this in itself can lead to higher student intake at tertiary level. This is explored in great detail in the excellent report, *Community Languages in Higher Education: Towards Realising the Potential*[34].

A new demographic of Arabists?

It is worth bearing this explosion of student interest in mind, as we hear the evidence for a new wave of younger literary translators, less privileged in class and education, and representing a more diverse demographic in terms of race and gender. Given how long it tends to take a translator to get to the point of producing serious literary work, it could well be that we are only seeing the beginnings of that shift, and that a great many more are on their way. As Bill Swainson optimistically puts it, he has been 'struck by a host of young translators coming up and potentially establishing a standing army of good literary translators from Arabic.' Like many industry insiders, he is inspired by the possibility of this injection of new blood into what has so far been 'a handful of translators who learnt their Arabic in the war, or the post-war period, and have been responsible for the whole thing!'

[33] http://www.ummah.com/forum/showthread.php?194963-GSCE-and-A-Level-Arabic
[34] http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/community/

This makes it even more crucial to get the quality control mechanisms that are so clearly lacking put into place, and to build up the much-needed training opportunities. However, it is worth noting that literary translation is still a minority activity, even among language graduates, not surprising given the reality of it paying less than the minimum wage in many cases. Centrally, then, if Arabic literature wants to attract the cream of this new crop of linguists, not only do training opportunities better tailored to the very specific needs of the literary translator need to blossom, but rights and pay need to be radically improved.

> There seems to be a move away from treating Arabic literature as a solely academic specialization, which has opened up the field to translators and editors and publishers from outside the departments of Middle Eastern Studies. I see this as positive change, and one that needs funds to continue. (Nariman Youssef)

Practical suggestions for improvements in training

Several of the literary translators interviewed for this study had practical suggestions for ways the formal and informal teaching of Arabic and of translation could be improved, based not only on their own experiences but, in several cases, because they are themselves language teachers. William Hutchins, for example, feels that formal training in both Arabic language and in translation itself is a problem area. In terms of language, he recommends more field trips for students, and (like so many other respondents), more immersion, in whatever form this can be attained. So, even when students are far from being socially immersed in Arabic society, he feels that media use is crucial.

Other practical suggestions reflect the need to change the image of Arabic as an extremely difficult language to learn, and to teach it just like any other modern language. This would also raise expectations of the standards students could attain — there is concern that, by being lumbered with the label of a 'difficult language', Arabic is allowed to be taught to a lower level than other languages.

Catherine Cobham is adamant that modern and classical Arabic literature should form an integral (and compulsory) part of all Arabic language university courses:

> Even if the student is not interested in literature *per se*, this helps him/her learn at a deeper level about the structures and usage of the language, and also about the culture. Unfortunately the emphasis is more on learning to use the language at a fairly basic level, and increasingly key texts are being read in (often poor) English translations. In my experience of teaching, some students are initially reluctant to read literature and think of their Arabic degree as being mainly vocational, but these students are almost invariably glad at the end of their degree course that they were obliged to study literary texts.

She is also concerned at the increasing trend for Arabic language teaching in universities to be 'farmed out to underpaid native speakers, while "academics" lecture in English on their own specialities.' She feels that the academic side and the language side should be more carefully integrated.

> Of course there have to be some applied contemporary language classes at university, but students who really just want to be able to use the language on a day to day basis should go to a language school or an intensive course in an Arab country, whereas I feel that a lot of university Arabic courses give language teaching to native speakers of varying abilities and teach the 'academic' material using translated texts.

5.4 Training opportunities and mentoring

A great many sources in this study affirm that some of the most valuable training comes about very informally, often through mentoring. Learning from word-for-word comparison of the original and its translation may be considered as a form of mentoring, but it is the informal mentoring relationships formed between senior translators and their junior colleagues that offer the most valuable training opportunities. Formalizing and funding this essential process would be a huge investment, one that would bring rich rewards in terms of quality, especially if regular workshops and longer-term residency programmes could be established to complement other initiatives targeting young translators, such as the Harvill Secker Young Translators' Prize inaugurated in 2010 (and awarded to a translation from the Arabic in 2011).

One of the most talked-about translator training events relevant to translation from and into Arabic was the pilot for a literary translation 'winter school' carried out in Cairo in January 2010 by the British Council in cooperation with the British Centre for Literary Translation and Arts Council England. The evaluation report on this important pilot project concludes that, 'the translation workshop can play an important role in raising standards and giving more emphasis to training and nurturing talent.'[35] This conclusion was unanimously supported by the translators involved, both at the level of senior mentors and observers, and the more junior participants.

Tony Calderbank, who was one of the faculty for the event, felt that it clearly demonstrated the arrival of a new generation of translators. 'I think younger people perhaps educated in Arabic in a less classical/orientalist kind of way are translating differently, in keeping with the times, perhaps, in terms of their style or the vocabulary they use.' Given that this younger generation with a different educational background are available, Calderbank feels that it is logical that they should be the first choice for the translation of young Arab writers, for example those on the Beirut39 list. 'I don't mean that an older person cannot translate a young one and vice versa. Ideally a competent translator should take a text and faithfully reproduce it, regardless of factors such as age or gender, but I can see that this is not always the case,' he says. Welcoming this development wholeheartedly, Calderbank feels it is important for senior

[35] Evaluation report by Kate Griffin for the British Council and the British Centre for Literary Translation, supplied by the author.

translators to be able to mentor the new generation and ensure that they acquire the skills needed to become accomplished translators, and that 'as much as possible' be done to ensure the continuing exchange of relevant ideas 'across age ranges and nationalities', as happened in the Cairo winter school.
The British Centre for Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia has been running acclaimed summer schools for years in a variety of language pairs, including, occasionally, Arabic to English. Paul Starkey, who has been a faculty member both there and, more recently, at the Cairo winter school:

> I don't think formal training is very relevant to literary translation (though it certainly is for other forms of translation); more workshops like the Cairo one earlier this year would definitely be a good thing, though. Workshops with authors, and colleagues working in other languages on the same book (I attended a couple of workshops like that in Toledo as part of the *Mémoires de la Méditerranée* project) are also very valuable.

Given the scarcity of these events for Arabic, it should not be surprising that there is great enthusiasm from the participants and the observers for more to happen in this vein. However, this obviously requires serious funding, and so one of the main aims of the Cairo workshop pilot in January 2010, according to the evaluation report, was 'to secure a group of partners (UK and overseas) who will provide long-term funding and support for future workshops and establish a sustainable programme.' Despite the 'overwhelming enthusiasm' of all the participant feedback, the report unfortunately concludes that this aim was only partially met. The report noted that, 'The Bloomsbury contingent was also impressed by what they saw, and there were initial discussions about how this workshop might complement plans by Bloomsbury Qatar to support translation in the Arab world', and that 'many of the academics — speakers and participants — noted that this model could be adapted for use in university teaching.'[36]

The British Centre for Literary Translation (BCLT), based at the University of East Anglia, is active in literary translation training through its summer school for emerging literary translators. The school consists of several parallel week-long workshops led by practising literary translators, each one focussing on the work of one author (who is present to discuss and answer questions), and has so far covered languages ranging from French and Spanish to Polish, Basque and Japanese. In addition to teaming up with the British Council and Arts Council England to run the Cairo Winter School, the BCLT included Arabic for the first time in its 2011 Summer School, with the participants working on a text by the young Saudi author Mohammed Hassan Alwan with translator Paul Starkey.

The Mentoring Scheme for young translators, established by the BCLT together with the Translators' Association in 2010, includes Arabic among the twelve languages catered for in 2012.

5.5 Translators' conditions of work

Pay issues

[36] Ibid.

The 2008 report *Comparative Income of Literary Translators in Europe*, on the working and remuneration conditions of literary translators across Europe published by CEATL (European Council of Literary Translators' Associations) backs up the anecdotal evidence we have had, concerning the poor working conditions of translators, with facts. Many translators interviewed for our study also confirmed that low fees and badly negotiated contracts are forcing them to rush texts they are working on, and not allowing them the time they need to achieve the desired standard.

> Publishers far too often want to reduce the literary translator to a paid servant, a secretary, and throw a small sum of money at him instead of offering rights to royalties. An editor told me that there is no such thing as a binding agreement between an author and a translator; the only thing that counts is a contract between a publisher and an author. That is such a bad attitude, especially when I spend years working with and for an author. (William Hutchins)

> Despite the relative growth in the market for Arabic literature in English translation, most of us still do it for the love of words. (Nariman Youssef)

> I don't think literary translation could ever pay enough to be described as a career. Literary translators need some other source of income in order to survive financially, which normally cuts down a lot on the time they have for translating. (Catherine Cobham)

> I love it, and I would do it full time if I could, but I have to pay the bills. (Marilyn Booth)

The illuminating CEATL study makes the useful distinction between 'professional literary translators' and 'active literary translators':

> The notion of 'professional literary translator' applies to all literary translators who work full time on literary translation and who earn their living mainly from literary translation and occasionally from translation-related literary activities (lectures and talks, readings, book publishing, literary criticism, etc.).
>
> The notion of 'active literary translator' applies to all literary translators who publish at least one literary translation every two to three years, but who earn their living mainly from professional activities other than literary translation (technical translation, teaching or other).' [37]

However, as we know anecdotally, and as the report confirms, in the United Kingdom and Ireland 'professional' literary translators are rare (less than 10% of all active translators, who are themselves a tiny proportion of professional linguists), if they exist at all. Certainly, in the preparation of this report no one was interviewed or referred to who would count in the first category.

[37] Holger Fock, Martin de Haan, Alena Lhotová, Comparative income of literary translators in Europe CEATL, Brussels 2007/2008

Similarly, the report refers to 'occasional grants and subsidies of negligible amounts awarded by panels in Ireland and the United Kingdom', but no examples of this between 1990 and 2010 for Arabic have been uncovered except for the BCLT bursary and the Cairo pilot winter school. In Ireland literary translators are completely exempt from tax. But it must be pointed out that earnings for literary translation are so low that most translators do not cross the yearly income tax threshold in the UK anyway! The CEATL report spells out just how bad things are:

> The results of this initial survey, published in December 2008, confirm the worst suspicions: nowhere in Europe can literary translators make a living under the conditions imposed on them by the 'market'; in many countries (including some of the wealthiest) their situation can only be described as catastrophic.

As Booth explains it, this is the reality of

> [...] the position of the translator as a cultural worker who is so often kept behind the scenes. The translator is a pivot point in intercultural conversations, a broker of discourses. Translators usually possess considerable cultural capital, as educated bilingual (at least) citizens of the world and often employees of elite educational institutions. Yet the translator is also a wage laborer in the transnational circuitry of representations, one who most often does not own the rights to her or his own work.[38]

The CEATL concludes with a well-framed and worrying question:

> Nonetheless, this survey [CEATL] clearly shows that literary translators cannot survive in the conditions imposed on them by 'the market'. This is a serious social problem on a continent that prides itself in being developed, multicultural and multilingual, but it is also, and above all, a major artistic and cultural problem. What are the implications for the quality of literary exchanges between our societies if literary translators have to dash off their work in haste in order to keep body and soul together?[39]

Action and protests by translators

These stirring words inevitably prompt the question: are Arabic-to-English literary translators taking action? And if so, how? Marilyn Booth describes an incident where she and several other translators (including Humphrey Davies and Raymond Stock) joined forces to put pressure on AUCP to accept a standard contract with a fixed share of royalties, and translators' names appearing on book covers. They were partially successful: their names do now appear on AUCP book covers, but the royalty dispute ended in a compromise rate which Booth still considers unsatisfactory. Neil Hewison, when asked about this dispute, recalled the royalties as having mainly a symbolic value, allowing the translators to feel 'an emotional connection' to the books. Certainly the financial sums in question are nominal only — but not insignificant enough to AUCP for them to grant the translators the full amount they were asking for.

[38] Ibid.
[39] Holger Fock, Martin de Haan, Alena Lhotová, Comparative income of literary translators in Europe CEATL, Brussels 2007/2008

Subsequently, Booth explains, she was planning to retranslate a Mahfouz novel for AUCP, but when she asked for royalties from Viking (who would have been the publisher outside Egypt) AUCP refused, and she backed out of the project on principle.

By far the most notorious dispute between a publisher and an Arabic translator of recent years, however, is Penguin's treatment of Booth over her translation of *Girls of Riyadh* by Rajaa Alsanea. While she acknowledges that this is an extreme example, Booth sees the case as emblematic of the wider status of the literary translator: 'The highly unprofessional manner in which Penguin Books and Alsanea treated me is an extreme but not unprecedented case of the tendency to minimize and devalue the importance of the translator's work, as a creative artist and as a cultural, linguistic and literary expert.'

Quality control suggestions

As discussed earlier, there is sometimes a need for Arabic editors or mentors to work with the author on the original text before it is translated, to make up for the editing by Arab publishers — at least until the uneven standards in the industry improve — so that the translator does not have to take that job on in addition to their own. Haus Arabia are developing this practice with Rafik Schami, informally, mentoring new writers.

There is also often a need for the translators themselves to have more editorial support, especially from bilingual editors or senior translators. Some translators have been called on to act as bilingual editors or critics, which is not always easy, as Paul Starkey explains:

> I have also quite frequently been asked to assess other translators' work, when a publisher is not happy with what he has in front of him but can't relate it to the original as he doesn't know Arabic. I find this awkward too, although that hasn't stopped me saying on occasion that the work is unpublishable, and the fault is in the translation and not the original.

Despite the potentially sensitive nature of this role, the idea of an analytical periodical publication or another type of forum for peer review of translations from Arabic appeals to many. It is widely felt that this would be a good way of fostering a robust critical culture and would raise the standard of Arabic-to-English translation as a result, as well as compensating somewhat for the superficial nature of most media translation reviews. Unlike its closest equivalent, *In Other Words*, (put out by the British Centre for Literary Translation, for distribution to Translators' Association members), or ALTA's Translation Review, this proposed journal would be solely about Arabic translation. It would be highly specialized, and would be a way to create a forum for peer review of published translations from Arabic. Marilyn Booth is a keen promoter of this idea:

> I think more public and collective initiatives like mentoring, residencies with rigorous mentoring, and a "kick-ass" journal that would make people take notice, would be important for both individuals and the profession. However, to do these things right will

> require a lot of work. What I envision is a journal that would be academic but accessible (*Times Literary Supplement*-ish), focused on Arabic, would make a splash, would also make a case more generally for engaged and knowledgeable reviews of translations.

As Booth emphasizes, the idea of mentoring schemes is closely linked to the editorial support and critical review culture discussed above. Mentoring — whether in the form of long-term (and long-distance) support and feedback for junior translators by senior colleagues, or via intensive residencies and workshops — is perhaps the most frequently-mentioned suggestion by industry insiders. There is a great deal of enthusiasm for residencies and workshops, especially for longer residencies (a month or more) with senior translators working with junior ones, both collectively and individually. The BCLT launched a mentoring scheme for translators of twelve languages, including Arabic, into English, in 2011.

More subventions for publishers to pay the translator are clearly important, so that presses are not taking such huge risks, and to enable less commercial works of high literary quality to be taken on, allowing translators and editors adequate time to produce first-class translations.

Several of the respondents interviewed for this study felt that many (or all) of these proposals could form part of one comprehensive package to foster new translators and improve quality across the board. What becomes clear, on examination of the last twenty years of Arabic literature in English, is that Arabic is in an unusual position in terms of the speed of the increase in exposure it has experienced. Unlike the tradition of translation from European languages, in which a culture of standards has been built up over generations, there has not been time for Arabic to reach that point. There is a feeling that measures need to be taken to ensure a gradual setting and raising of standards, and that these recommendations could be a significant step towards that goal.

Membership of the UK Translators Association

At present there are no literary translators of Arabic in the TA online database. Unlike translators' associations in other countries, the TA does not keep records of which languages its members translate from, unless they fill their details in on an online database. Only one of the interviewed translators is a member. When asked why they were not members, especially given some of the rights issues that were raised, many of the translators had not really considered it — in fact in at least one case the question served as a prompt to make someone join up! Those that are based outside of the UK felt it did not apply to them, and some of the academics thought they were already paying enough in membership fees to their subject societies and various other bodies. Ironically, the wages for literary translation are so low that the translators feel they cannot afford to join the organization that might help them to receive a fairer reward for their labours. In contrast to this state of affairs in the UK, the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) was frequently mentioned and praised for its work in general: as a good source of information about possible venues for publication, for its journal *Translation Review*, and for its conferences.