

Spanish Orientalism and Modern Arabic Literature

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Abstract

This paper tackles the relations of Spanish Orientalism with Modern Arabic Literature. First, it deals with the general characteristics of the field of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Spain. Then it addresses how Modern Arabic Literature has been taught and translated at Spanish universities, and what kind of research has been done. Finally approaches the impact of the Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Naguib Mahfuz in 1988 and the current state of the field.

Key words: Orientalism, Spain, Arabic Literature, Al-Andalus, Translation

الملخص

تطرح هذه الدراسة علاقات الاستشراق الإسباني بالأدب العربي المعاصر. تعالج أولاً خصوصيات ميدان الاستشراق الإسباني. ثانياً تستعرض كيف ترجم ودرّس هذا الأدب. وأخيراً تبحث تأثير جائزة نوبل لنجيب محفوظ في تطور الميدان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستشراق -

إسبانيا - الأدب العربي - الأندلس -

الترجمة

Three decades after the 1988 Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to Naguib Mahfuz seems a timely moment to take stock of the state of modern Arabic literature in Spain. This is a good opportunity to look not only at how modern Arabic literature has been translated, but also at what kind of research has been done and how this literature has been taught at Spanish universities. In order to get a clearer understanding of the impact of the Nobel Prize, it would also be useful to take a look at the situation of Arabic literature before 1988. In addition, it would be worthwhile to briefly outline the general characteristics of the field of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Spain.

As James Monroe correctly pointed out in *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship*, Spanish Orientalism has been restricted, almost exclusively, to Arabic studies due to Spain's particular history. Indeed, a tradition of Arabic studies can be traced back as far as the sixteenth century. However, this does not necessarily mean that there has been continuity in the development of this academic discipline. As Monroe observes, the origins of Arabic studies in Spain were not "strictly speaking 'Arabism' as an intellectual discipline, but rather an anti-Islamic propagandistic and crusading movement closely related to the Spanish *Reconquista*".¹

The development of Arabic Studies has been marked and conditioned in Spain by two major historical events: Al-Andalus and the Spanish colonial experience in North Africa (Morocco and Western Sahara). These two historical events also gave birth to two different schools of Spanish Orientalism; on the one hand, the academic discipline known as Arabism, primarily devoted to Al-Andalus, and, on the other hand, the branch of Spanish Orientalism known as Africanism, related to the Spanish colonial venture in Morocco.

The geographical proximity of Spain to Morocco, and their shared history, could hardly make Morocco the source of that radical “otherness” which often inspired Orientalists. Nor could Edward’s Said definition of “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominant metropolitan center ruling a distant territory”² be fully applicable to the case of Spain and Morocco. And if Morocco was too close, Al-Andalus was inside in both geographical and historical terms.

Al-Andalus

Up to the mid-twentieth century, Spanish Arabism was almost exclusively devoted to Al-Andalus. The Spanish school of Arabists dedicated its efforts to the study of the philosophy, literature, science and religion of Al-Andalus in an attempt to highlight the singularities of “Muslim Spain”. The historian Eduardo Manzano has written about the peculiarities of nineteenth century Spanish Arabism. By his account, this discipline was essentially philological but gradually evolved into a historical discipline with the fundamental aim of explaining that unique episode of Al-Andalus. This occurred at a time in the nineteenth century when a number of academic disciplines were trying to establish the national history of Spain.³

As a consequence, the study of Al-Andalus became something of a paradox: it was not undertaken to explore an Islamic society, but rather a Spanish phenomenon, as if it had been a deeply Hispanic society and a culture “where some kind of essence, a timeless and perennial spirit, had incarnated again in a culture and a religion apparently different, but at its heart highly coincident”.⁴ Consequently, this trend, normally termed “traditional Arabism”, was mainly devoted to the translation of historical sources and documents as a way of

throwing light on what had to be assumed as a part of Spain's national history. For all these reasons, Al-Andalus was converted into Spain's "domestic Orient" and led to a sort of academic blind alley, or, to what has been termed as *ensimismamiento andalusí* (Andalusian self-absorption).⁵ As for the place of Arabic literature in this framework, it was generally used as a tool to understand, illustrate and demonstrate that "unique period" of Spain's history.

The most important journal of this traditional Arabism was called, not surprisingly, *Al-Andalus* (1933-1978) and was established under the auspices of the Escuela de Estudios Árabes. This institution was founded in 1932, during the Second Republic, in Madrid and Granada. Its purpose was to carry out research into Arab civilisation, and, as was the case in Spanish universities, this was done in conjunction with Hebrew studies.⁶ Emilio García Gómez, to become one the most prominent Arabists in the twentieth century and whose name will come up at various points in this paper, was the first director of the Escuela in Granada, and the editor of *Al-Andalus*. In 1939, the Franco regime merged the Madrid and Granada Escuelas, and incorporated them into the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC). Nowadays, the CSIC houses one of the most important specialist libraries on Arabic and Islamic studies.

Morocco

Relations between Morocco and Spain are marked not only by the historical weight of Al-Andalus and the rhetoric and tensions of a shared history, but by many other events as well. The most important of these can be placed in the period which began with the so-called War of Africa (Guerra de África, 1859-60) and continued up to the recent

influx of Moroccan immigrants into Spain. This period includes the Spanish colonial experience in Morocco, the protectorate (1912-1956) and the long term effects of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), during which Moroccan troops actively participated in the Franco forces, and subsequently, in the Franco regime.

As Hernando de Larramendi and Azaola pointed out, Spanish university Arabists rarely got involved with the colonial enterprise. The so-called Africanists, many of whom were military personnel, “produced most of the studies of Morocco and Western Sahara in colonial research centres such as the Jalifiano Muley el Hasan Institute of Moroccan Studies (1937) and the General Franco Institute for Hispano-Arabic Studies and Research (1938). Both these centres were based in Tetouan whereas the Institute for African Studies was based in Madrid (1947)”.⁷

Another main difference between the two schools of Spanish Orientalism had to do with language. Academic Arabism was based on the study of written Arabic, whereas Africanism focused mainly on the study and teaching of Moroccan Arabic and Berber⁸. However, language was not the only difference between the two disciplines. For example, in professional terms, the Arabists were first and foremost academics for whom translation was a complementary activity, whereas the Africanists were often professional translators and interpreters, mainly in the military, legal and commercial arenas. Nonetheless, there were important literary works, such as the first history of Moroccan literature, *al-Nubug al-magribi fi l-adab al-`arabi*⁹ (1938), by the Tangier polymath Abd Allah Kannun, which were partially translated and published under Spanish colonial auspices (*El genio marroquí en la literatura árabe*¹⁰, 1939). Curiously enough, this work was banned by

military decree in French Morocco because it was considered to be a nationalist plea. Tetouan, the capital of the Spanish protectorate, was to become an important centre for translation from Arabic into Spanish, as well as for the flow of a large number of translations from Spanish to Arabic.¹¹ A prime example is the first translation into Arabic of *Don Quixote* (1951-52), by nationalist intellectual Tuhāmī al-Wazzānī.¹²

Defined by some historians as “rachitic”, the Spanish colonial period in Morocco was nevertheless marked by some interesting cultural initiatives such as the magazines *Ketama* and *Al-Motamid*. Curiously, these magazines, which published the first translations of modern Arabic literature into Spanish, defined themselves as “Hispano-Árabe”. The aim of *Al-Motamid*, under the editorship of Trina Mercader, was to acquaint Spanish readers with Arabic poetry.¹³ The magazine was published in Larache from 1947 to 1952 and in Tetouan from 1953 to 1955. *Ketama*, the literary supplement of *Tamuda*, was published by the Delegación de Educación y Cultura de la Alta Comisaría between 1953 and 1959, under the editorship of the Spanish poet Jacinto López Gorjé. This bilingual literary supplement mainly published translations of Spanish and Arab poets. In the 1950’s, there was a group of young Arabists on government research grants in Tetouan, and it was this group that was responsible for the first translations of contemporary Arab poets into Spanish. Juan Vernet, Fernando de la Granja, Pedro Martínez Montávez and Leonor Martínez Martín were later to become professors and leading academics. Strange as it may seem, the link between the origins of modern Arabism and colonial Morocco is a fact which has been underestimated by Spanish academia.

With the demise of the Protectorate in 1956, all these cultural initiatives disappeared. It would not be an exaggeration to state that the Spanish academics who specialized in Arabic and Islamic studies not only showed a marked lack of interest in researching on Morocco but also on the Arab and Islamic world in general, as their attention was focused exclusively on Al-Andalus. It would not be until the end of the twentieth century that Morocco, with its history, politics, literature and languages, would again become a field of research in Spanish universities.

The Origins of Contemporary Studies

As mentioned earlier, the origin of Spanish academic Arabism focused on modern Arabic literature is inextricably linked to Morocco and translation. The first translation from Arabic into Spanish, which was not related to Al-Andalus or Morocco, was Taha Husayn's autobiographical novel *Al-Ayyam (Los días)*. Coincidentally, this was also the first novel to be translated into other European languages, such as English and French. Translated by Emilio García Gómez in 1954, *Los días* can be considered the starting point not only of a new phase of Arabic to Spanish translation, but also of an interest in modern Arabic literature in general. In the following year, García Gómez translated *Yawmiyyat na'ib fi-l-aryaf (Diario de un fiscal rural)* by another Egyptian author, Tawfiq al-Hakim. This translation was also the first of a series devoted to contemporary Arabic literature entitled *Autores Árabes Contemporáneos (Contemporary Arab Authors)*, published under the auspices of the brand new Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura (IHAC), created in 1954 and dependant on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁴ For decades, the IHAC was a key institution in Spain

dedicated to the translation and diffusion of Arabic literature and culture. The institute's first director was, once again, Emilio García Gómez. Its specialized library in Arabic and Islamic studies (now part of the institution that succeeded the IHAC in 1988) is nowadays the most important research centre for these fields in Spain, the Biblioteca Islámica "Félix M^a Pareja".¹⁵ It is worth pointing out that one of the main foreign policy tenets of the isolated Franco regime was the "Arab policy". A rhetorical evocation of traditional friendship between Spain and the Arab world, it evolved, in practical terms, into a policy of "non-recognition of the State of Israel, and the ideological exploitation of the myth of al-Andalus".¹⁶ This policy was reinforced by the opening of many cultural centres in Arab capitals.

Aside from the IHAC, the Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos de Madrid,¹⁷ was also important. It was founded in 1950 by Taha Husayn, and was to become yet another institution contributing to the publication of modern Arabic literature. However, it is important to add that almost all the authors published were Egyptians, and that the books issued were not normally distributed outside the most specialist academic circles. After the Instituto Egipcio was established, several small institutions and associations were also founded, such as the Casa Hispano-Árabe and the Asociación Islamo-Cristiana. These were fostered by the Instituto Egipcio and Spanish Arabists. It is interesting to note that the titles of these organizations denote a lack of distinction between culture, language and religion. Nor did they make clear distinctions between the past and the present.

Particular recognition should be given to Emilio García Gómez who bestowed more attention to Arabic literature than did his Arabist colleagues since they viewed it as little more than a historical tool for

their work on Al-Andalus. He was also the translator of a very influential anthology *Poemas arabigoandaluces* (1930). This work made a deep impression on the Spanish literary establishment and was possibly the inspiration for the *casidas* of Lorcas's *Diván de Tamarit*. García Gómez was also the translator of another very influential work, Ibn Hazm *Dove's Neck Ring*, published in 1952, and which contained a preface written by the prestigious philosopher José Ortega y Gasset.

However, as Paradela observes, a couple of translations can not really be considered the basis of a research trend in Arabic literature, nor can they be used as a yardstick to measure what was being studied at Spanish universities, which devoted most of their energies to Al-Andalus.¹⁸ The real “epistemological break”, as it is often referred to, and which heralded the start of a trend in Arabism devoted to the contemporary Arab world and its literature, was to come with Pedro Martínez Montávez, whose name will also appear at various points in these pages.¹⁹ In 1958, Martínez Montávez published an anthology of modern Arabic poetry, *Poesía árabe contemporánea*. Two years earlier in Tetouan, he had published an anthology of poetry from the *Mahjar*, entitled *La escuela siro-americana*. We should also remember Leonor Martínez Martín, another young researcher who was working on a government grant in the Spanish protectorate and who published several translations of modern Moroccan and Lebanese authors for the magazines of “Spanish Morocco”. She also published a collection of poems *La luna y yo* (1956), by Tetouan poet Muhammad Sabbag, and later published another influential anthology, *Antología de poesía árabe contemporánea* (1972).

Nevertheless, the actual start of the contemporary trend of Arabism did not arrive until 1975, when a new programme of studies

devoted entirely to the contemporary Arab and Islamic worlds was established at the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid –a new university which had been inaugurated in 1968. The fact that the department specialised in modern Arabic literature was probably due to Martínez Montávez, who, in 1972, became head of the department. This was also the department where, in 1971, a group of young academics founded the journal *Almenara*, a modest, yet important contribution to the field. For the first time, a publication was devoted to the contemporary Arab and Islamic worlds.

Today, it seems clear that the creation of this department was a decisive break, not only with Al-Andalus as the main focus of Arabism, but also with the traditional academic framework of Semitics in which Arabic and Islamic studies were integrated with Hebraic and Jewish studies at the universities of Madrid, Barcelona and Granada. The Universidad Autónoma was the first university to leave aside the study Hebrew –a decision which, even today, has great political implications. However, substantive research into modern Arabic literature was not to arrive until the early eighties, when young lecturers, researchers and students from the Universidad Autónoma started to present their first master's and doctoral dissertations on modern Arabic literature.

Translation before 1988 - The Anthological and Institutional Stage

Prior to 1988, the study and translation of Arabic literature in Spain was a task almost exclusively undertaken by university professors –Arabists who often devoted their energies to translating Arabic literary works into Spanish. In fact, as pointed out in *Arabismo*

y *traducción*, translation had been “one of the main activities of the twentieth century Arabists”.²⁰

If we take a look at how Arabic literature has been presented in Spain, we can conclude, with few exceptions, that the most common format has been that of the anthology. For decades, publishers and editors resorted to anthologies which combined different genres, countries and individual authors. The anthology format was a way of giving readers a sample of contemporary Arabic writing in which the most important reason for the selection of texts was thematic rather than stylistic.

Some researchers of Spanish Arabism have concluded that poetry was not only the most studied genre, but that it was also the genre that was most translated and anthologized by Spanish academics.²¹ Pedro Martínez Montávez, who translated modern Arabic poetry since the mid-fifties, used this format in the publications of the love poems by Nizār Qabbānī, *Poemas amorosos árabes*, (1965, IHAC), the Palestinian poets of resistance, *Poetas palestinos de Resistencia* (1969), and the Arab realist poets, *Poetas árabes realistas* (1970). Martínez Montávez also translated a thematic anthology about Palestine in modern Arabic poetry, *El Poema es Filistín (Palestina en la poesía árabe actual)* (1980) and a general anthology of Arabic poetry, *Poesía árabe actual* (1985), published by the literary magazine *Litoral*. Also, in 1968, he translated, for the first time into a European language, an almost complete version of Adonis Mihyar, *Canciones de Mihyar el de Damasco*.

As mentioned above, the other pioneer of the translation of modern Arabic poetry, Leonor Martínez Martín, who also started her career in colonial Morocco, is the author of another important

anthology, *Antología de poesía árabe contemporánea* (1972)²². This anthology was significant because it was the first time that contemporary Arabic poetry was published by a mainstream publisher for the general public in Spain. Additional national anthologies of poetry appeared in the seventies, such as *País de larga pena. Pequeña antología de la poesía argelina contemporánea* (1979), translated and edited by Emilio Sola.

In the realm of the short story, general anthologies started to appear in 1965, when *Nuevos cuentos árabes* (New Arabic Stories) was published by the IHAC. This was to be followed by such titles as *Narraciones árabes del siglo XX* (1969), *Cuentos egipcios de Taymur* (1976), translated by María Eugenia Gálvez, and *Del Atlas al Tigris. Relatos árabes de hoy* (1985), translated collectively.

In the seventies, the IHAC published a series of national anthologies. These anthologies were the result of the *Seminario de Pensamiento Árabe Contemporáneo* (Seminar on Contemporary Arab Thought), which was promoted, among others, by Martínez Montávez and Gálvez. In 1973, after a first bibliographical study, *Contribución para una bibliografía árabe del siglo XX*, was published, the first anthology of Iraqi literature, *Literatura iraquí contemporánea*, came out in print. In 1978, an anthology of Tunisian literature was published, *Literatura tunecina contemporánea*. The last anthology was devoted to Morocco, *Literatura y pensamiento marroquíes contemporáneos*, and was published in 1981. These anthologies consisted mainly of excerpts from authors of all genres, periods and even languages. There was no attempt to explain the genesis of these literatures, apart from providing a short historical introduction.

As for the novel, very few attempts were made to translate them into Spanish. After an initial debut in the mid-fifties, the next work to be published came with the translation, in 1963, of *Qarya zalima (La ciudad inicua)*, by Kamil Husayn. This was translated by José María Fórneas, who was also responsible for the Spanish version of Anis Frayha *Escucha, Rida* (1978).²³

With the exception of the *Introduction to Arabic poetry*, by Adonis (*Introducción a la poesía árabe*, translated by Carmen Ruiz in 1976), essays written in Arabic have very rarely been translated into Spanish. However, it should be pointed out that there has always existed a huge market in Spain for books dealing with Arab and Islamic issues, which have been translated from English and French. A prime example of this is the case of the Moroccan writer, Abdallah Laroui. Only one of his books written in Arabic has been translated (*Marruecos, Sáhara... (Diarios 1974-1981). Pensamientos de la mañana*, 2015), whereas most, if not all, of his books which were written in French have been translated into Spanish.

With very few exceptions, most of these translations were published within some kind of institutional framework, such as the IHAC, an institution which made a significant contribution to the translation of modern Arabic literature. However, it should be made clear that these institutional publications had a major shortcoming in that they were translations targeted at specialised readers, students and researchers, and not the general public. In general, these anthologies and translations had a primarily educational objective, namely, to acquaint students with the “idiosyncrasies” of Arab and Islamic societies. Consequently, these translations had numerous characteristics in common. For example, they had copious footnotes in which the

translators explained Islamic and Arabic concepts. They also included a lot of vocabulary which was directly transcribed from Arabic. Finally, they employed a large number of *arabismos*, Spanish words with Arabic origins, some of which had fallen into disuse. These features – shared both by traditional and contemporary Arabists– resulted in strange texts which were difficult to read for average readers.²⁴

Research into Modern Arabic Literature

It is clear that one of the main features of contemporary Arabism in relation to Arabic literature has been the absolute preponderance of translation over other activities, such as literary criticism or literary history. Furthermore, it is evident that “prior to 1988, not much research had been done on modern Arabic literature”.²⁵ We could conclude that there is neither a direct link between translation and research nor between translation and the teaching of modern Arabic literature in Spanish universities, which is still characteristic to this day.²⁶ Nonetheless, in 1966, Juan Vernet, a professor at the Universidad de Barcelona, did publish a comprehensive short history of Arabic literature, *Literatura árabe*, which included chapters on the *Nahda* and modern Arabic literature.²⁷

Between 1971 and 1977, the journal *Almenara* was published at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, a modest project that nonetheless served as a means of cohesion among researchers and professors interested in modern Arab culture. *Almenara* was originally the official publication of the Asociación Islamo-Cristiana. However, dating from the second issue, with Pedro Martínez Montávez as the journal’s editor, the sub-title “Revista sobre el mundo árabo-islámico moderno” was added. As for the publication’s approach to literature, it

was primarily focused on the translation of poetry and short stories.²⁸ Apart from *Almenara*, some other very important journals were started up at that time. Examples include the CSIC publication, *al-Qantara*²⁹ (1980-), which was the successor to *Al-Andalus*, and *Awraq*³⁰ (1978-), published by the IHAC. Other noteworthy academic journals which appeared at other points in time include *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos*³¹ founded in 1955 and *Sharq al-Andalus* (1984-2002), – respectively promoted by the Universidad de Granada and the Universidad de Alicante. None of these publications specialized in literature, although they were always open to contributions dealing with literature.

As for research focused on modern Arabic literature, it was once again Pedro Martínez Montávez who led the way. In 1974, he published the first comprehensive history of modern Arabic literature, *Introducción a la literatura árabe moderna*, a publication which became, in essence, a standard course book at Spanish universities. It is also worth mentioning that, in 1974, *El Cairo de Mahmud Taymur: Personajes literarios* was published by María Eugenia Gálvez, on her return from Egypt.

Nevertheless, it was not until the beginning of the 1980s when the first doctoral theses on modern Arabic literature were presented at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and the Universidad de Granada. These two universities worked in close cooperation and were to become the trailblazers in research into modern Arabic literature. Up to half the doctoral theses presented during those years (the 80's) dealt with modern Arabic literature, which signaled a decisive break with tradition.³² Martínez Montávez was also involved in several publications on modern Arabic literature, such as *Exploraciones en*

literatura neo-árabe (1977, IHAC) and *Escritos sobre literatura palestina* (1984), which were usually compilations of previous articles. In terms of popular Arabic literature, despite the brilliant contributions of publications like Serafín Fanjul's *Canciones populares árabes*³³ (1975) and *Literatura popular árabe* (1977), and a first essay by Abd el-Halim Wahdan, *Literatura infantil en Egipto* (1972, IHAC), this literature received a lukewarm response from Spanish academics.

The link between the Palestinian cause and the growing interest in modern Arabic literature was a European phenomenon which was not confined to Spain alone. At that time, given that young academics were generally sympathetic towards Pan-Arabism and the Palestinian cause, it is hardly surprising that these attitudes were reflected in literary studies.³⁴ The Palestinian cause had a deep and positive impact in Spain on the development of studies about the contemporary Arab world, but it also contributed to the creation of a powerful link between literature and politics. This political militant approach, which highlighted the ideological aspects and commitment of literary works, was to become the most common way of reading Arabic literature. This is reflected in the kind of translations and research undertaken, with titles such as *Poetas Palestinos de Resistencia* (1969), *El Poema es Filistín* (1980), and *Dolor y destierro en la narrativa palestina moderna: el caso de Gassan Kanafani* (1987). Nonetheless, as Pedro Martínez Montávez has pointed out, even before the recognition of Israel in 1986 by the socialist government of Felipe González, “dealing with contemporary Arab issues was not an easy task in Spain”.³⁵

It should also be mentioned that, together with Palestine, contemporary academics have bestowed special attention to the presence of Al-Andalus and Spain in modern Arabic literature. The

clearest example of this trend is represented by Martínez Montávez and his books *Nuevos Cantos Árabes a Granada* (1979) and especially *Al-Andalus, España en la Literatura Árabe Contemporánea* (1992). As happened with historical Al-Andalus and Palestine, it became a sort of duty for every Arabist to pay special attention to the Hispanic and Andalusian themes in modern Arabic literature. Probably, this has quite a lot to do with the special interest devoted to the Latin American *Mahjar*. The presence of poets such as Qabbani and al-Bayati in “golden exiles” in Madrid might well be another contributing factor to such a development. At first glance, this intense attention might appear rather natural but it may well have contributed to a distortion of Arabic literature, and the study of it, in Spain, with the result being an overemphasis on Andalusian/Spanish contents. By establishing contents, with rare exceptions, as the primary way to approach Arabic literature, academics were neglecting the real development of this literature.³⁶ Along with the thematic framework, the study of Arabic literature has been carried out, for the most part, on the basis of a biographical approach to authors. Thus, contemporary Arabic literature was often explained largely based on personal tastes and impressions; an “eclectic” perspective far removed from distinct critical trends. This situation still persists today as the most common way of dealing with Arabic literature in Spain.³⁷

The Impact of the Awarding of the Nobel Prize to Naguib Mahfuz

The awarding of the 1988 Nobel Prize to the Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfuz was a decisive turning point for modern Arabic literature in Spain as it resulted in a substantial increase in the number of translations from Arabic into Spanish. It was also a landmark in the rise of academic and general interest in modern Arabic literature. In

fact, the bestowal of the Nobel Prize on Mahfouz “has motivated the most important flow of translation from Arabic into Spanish with the exception, of course, of the ongoing publication of the sacred text of the Koran and the various versions of *The Thousand and One Nights*”.³⁸ According to Bernabé López García, a historian of Spanish Arabism, the bestseller status of the Koran and *The Thousand and One Nights* in Spain and other countries can be explained by the survival of a certain Orientalist perception of Arabs.³⁹ Lastly, we come to the extraordinary phenomenon of Gibran Khalil Gibran, who has been a bestselling author for many years, thanks in part to his popularity in New Age circles. According to the Spanish ISBN, there are almost three hundred editions of Gibran Khalil Gibran on the market –a figure which is even higher than *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Nonetheless, at the end of the twentieth century, translations from Arabic into Spanish represented only 0,098% of translation flows. Out of a hundred thousand books translated in Spain between 1990 and 2000, only about one hundred titles were from Arabic⁴⁰ –not exactly an impressive figure considering that, in this so-called “golden age” of translation from Arabic into Spanish, a third of them are Mahfuz’s works.

However, without a shadow of a doubt, the awarding of the Nobel Prize to Mahfuz was a watershed in the history of modern Arabic literature in Spain. Prior to Mahfuz, the translation of literature had generally been an altruistic activity confined to academics who usually published within institutions. The Nobel Prize created a new phenomenon in which mainstream publishers, by no means specialized in Arabic literature, began to see its viability and commercial potential. At the same time, a number of publishing houses which were deeply

committed to publishing high quality Arabic literature and translations, also appeared on the scene such as Ediciones del Oriente y del Mediterráneo, founded in 1989.⁴¹

Prior to Mahfuz's Nobel, the 1982 publication of the translation of Muhammad Shukri's (Mohamed Choukri) autobiographical narrative *El pan desnudo* (*For bread alone*) was a significant landmark in the reception of Arabic literature in Spain. It is a work that could well be considered a real phenomenon as its appeal went far beyond the tight circle of specialists and Arabists. This was probably due to the preface by Juan Goytisolo, whose decisive contribution to the knowledge of modern Arabic literature in Spain deserves full recognition.

Given that poetry was the most important genre in Arabic literature, it is not surprising that, up to 1988, it was the most translated genre from Arabic into Spanish. However, by the end of twentieth century, translation flows from Arabic into Spanish made a shift towards narrative texts, especially the novel. For example, over the last thirty years, most of the important Arab novelists have been translated into Spanish. These writers include Abd al-Rahman Munif (*Al este del Mediterráneo; Ciudades de sal*), the Egyptian authors Jamal al-Ghitani (*Zayni Barakat*), Radwa Ashour (*Granada*), Sonallah Ibrahim (*El comité; A escondidas*), Ibrahim Aslan (*La garza*), Yahya Haqqi and Edward al-Kharrat, the Moroccan authors Salim Himmich (*El loco del poder, El sapientísimo*) and Muhammad Zafzaf, the Lebanese authors Rashid al-Daif (*Estimado señor Kawabata*), Huda Barakat (*la luz de la pasión, El labrador de aguas*) and Elias Khuri, the Palestinian authors Gassan Kanafani (*Hombres al sol*), Emil Habibi and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, the Sudanese author al-Tayyib Salih (*Época de migración al*

norte), the Libyan author Ibrahim al-Kuni (*Oro en polvo*), the Algerian author Abd al-Hamid ben Hadduqa (*Viento del sur*) and, lastly, the Iraqi author Fuad al-Takarli. To some extent, this shift has also been reflected in research on Arabic literature.

Despite the momentum given to the translation and study of Arabic narrative in Spain after the awarding of the Nobel Prize to Mahfuz, Arabic poetry has by no means been neglected. Not only have poets like Mahmud Darwish, Adonis, Nizar Qabbani and Abd al-Wahhab al-Bayati had their works published in general anthologies, but they have also had entire books translated and published. Between the four authors, these published works number more than forty.

In the period up to the late 1990's, the fact that the majority of the books translated from Arabic to Spanish were by Egyptian authors can not be explained solely by the success of Mahfuz. There were many objective reasons, such as the importance of Egyptian authors in the Arabic literary scene, for the predominance of Egyptian authors. Nowadays, Morocco and the Gulf States have an increasing presence on the list of translated works, with national short story anthologies such as *Antología de relatos marroquíes* (1990), *Cuentos de Arabia* (2005) and many other titles. As with earlier publications, these works were published as mere translations, with little supplementary information about the national literature to which they belong.

Research on Modern Arabic Literature after the Nobel Prize

In 1994, Carmen Gómez Camarero published a bibliographical account about the “contribution of Spanish Arabism to modern Arabic literature” (*Contribución del arabismo español a la literatura árabe contemporánea (1930-1992)*). Judging from the size of this four

hundred page publication, it would seem that the contribution had been huge. However, the book includes essays, translations, articles and reviews. In addition, it is not only devoted to authors who published in Arabic, but also includes authors, such as Tahar Ben Jelloun, who wrote in other languages.

It is true that after 1988, a great many translations were made but, as Paradela rightly points out, this did not result in serious academic research on modern Arabic literature in Spain.⁴² Even by the end of the nineties, most of the PhD courses offered at Spanish universities still dealt with medieval subjects.⁴³ Once again, it was the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid which led the way when it organized, in 1988, the *Jornadas de Literatura Árabe Moderna y Contemporánea*⁴⁴, a conference of academics and specialists working on modern Arabic literature in Spain. This conference was held but was not to be repeated in successive years.

Mahfuz's Nobel also resulted in research being undertaken into the author's works, such as the collective study *Realidad y fantasía en Naguib Mahfuz*⁴⁵ (1991). Some monographic research, such as *Análisis de la temporalidad en la "Trilogía" de Nayib Mahfuz* (1998), by María Dolores López Enamorado, was the fruit of doctoral theses.

While studies of poetry predominated, some important research was also undertaken into Arabic theatre, starting with *Aproximación al teatro egipcio moderno*⁴⁶ (1990), by Pilar Lirola Delgado, followed by *Una panorámica del teatro tunecino contemporáneo 1990-1975* (1991), by María Victoria González Rebolledo, *La identidad del teatro marroquí* (1992), by Zouhir Louassini, and, the most comprehensive of all, *Siglo y medio de teatro árabe* (2000), by Waleed Saleh Alkhalifa. Other interesting publications, often growing out of PhD dissertations, were

also published after 1988, such as *Literatura, crítica literaria y ensayo en la revista "Al-Adab" (1953-1984)*⁴⁷, *Tendencias de la poesía tunecina contemporánea (1956-1990) en su marco político y social*⁴⁸ (1992), by Josefina Veglison, and the collection of essays, *Literatura árabe de hoy* (1990), by Pedro Martínez Montávez.

For academic journals as well, 1988 was an important year. That was the year that a new series of *Awraq* came out which specialized in the contemporary Arab world. It was published by the Instituto de Cooperación con el Mundo Árabe (ICMA), the institute that succeeded the IHAC in 1988. In 1995, *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* evolved into two more specialized journals; one devoted to Arab-Islamic issues and the other to Hebrew-Judaic studies. Around the same time, the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the Universidad de Cádiz respectively founded *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes*⁴⁹ (1990-) and *al-Andalus-Magreb*⁵⁰ (1993-).

The Reception and Distortion of Arabic Literature

In the preface to a recent anthology of Moroccan poetry, Abellatif Laabi made the observation that Morocco, in spite of being the closest Arab country to Europe, still continues to be consigned to the periphery of the European literary field. Laabi went on to say that, despite the lapse of half a century from the end of the colonial period to the present day, European attitudes of domination and exclusion towards Arab culture continue to exist. He ended by saying that we should not fool ourselves into thinking that voices of the Arab world had finally made the great leap across the cultural divide between Europe and the Arab world. On the rare occasions that this has actually happened, the work in question has

either been written in the language of the old metropolis, or, the author is an exceptional case, such as Mahfuz.⁵¹

Besides considering the translations themselves, in order to get an overview of the impact of Arabic literature in Spain, it is worth taking a look to reviews published by newspapers, journals and magazines –all key indicators of the reception of Arabic literature in Spain. Until the 1990's, most book reviews were written by Arabists and were published in specialized journals such as the previously mentioned *Almenara*, *Awraq*, and *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos*. These journals and their readership were confined to specialized circles which rarely had any influence outside university faculties. However, the Mahfuz phenomenon changed that situation as book reviews began to be published in literary magazines and cultural supplements of national newspapers as well. More translations produced more reviews which, in turn, increased the public's knowledge and interest in Arabic literature. Further impetus was given to Arabic literature when the series *al-Qibla*, launched in the early nineties by Juan Goytisolo in Huerca and Fierro publishers helped popularize Arabic literature, at least among the literary-minded.

Nonetheless, a more rigorous examination of these reviews reveals the same old prejudices and stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims which lie at the heart of the Orientalist perception.⁵² Besides religion and politics, one of the main perspectives employed in the approach to Arabic literature has been the role of women –an approach which has become almost an obsession for some reviewers. In some cases, they have taken on the mantle of championing the cause of Arab women, leading to a situation where lack of information, combined with prejudice, has produced an explosive cocktail. Book covers of

translated works also confirm the survival of a rooted orientalist imagery.

Return to Morocco

Until recently, due to the scant amount of translations, research and teaching done in Spain on modern Moroccan literature, one could be forgiven for assuming that Morocco was a distant Arab country.⁵³ In fact, up to the year 2000, most of the contributions of Spanish Arabism were devoted to the Mashriq countries. Since the end of the colonial period, the champions of contemporary Arabism had generally left the Maghrib countries to one side.⁵⁴

However, from the end of the colonial period there have been sporadic bursts of interest in Moroccan literature. This is largely thanks to the efforts of people such as Fernando de Ágreda, editor in chief of the previously mentioned collective work, *Literatura y pensamiento marroquíes contemporáneos* (1981), published by the IHAC. His earlier survey of interviews with Moroccan writers, *Encuesta sobre la literatura marroquí actual*, published in 1975 (IHAC), was the first study carried out on post-colonial Moroccan literature. Ágreda also published many articles in publications like the *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Orientalistas*.

However, by the end of the twentieth century, Morocco was to occupy the heart of contemporary Arabism. This renewed interest in Morocco may well be due to immigration to Spain –a social phenomenon which in two decades has soared from a few thousand immigrants to reach today's figure of 800,000 Moroccan residents in Spain. Aside from the issues related to immigration, Morocco's politics, history and culture have an ever increasing presence in the Spanish mass media as well as in

Spanish academic circles. Since *For Bread Alone* was translated in 1982, there has also been a steady increase in translations of Moroccan authors. However, as has happened before, what we may be witnessing is an interest in Moroccan literature which has arisen from motivations which are not entirely literary but mainly sociological. The appearance in 1989 of publishers such as Ediciones del Oriente y del Mediterráneo, with a strong attention to the Maghreb and Morocco, and the launching of translation projects such as *Literatura y pensamiento marroquíes*⁵⁵ by the Escuela de Traductores de Toledo have contributed to enhance this relevance of Morocco within the social as well as the academic milieus.

Another factor which has somewhat distorted the perception of modern Moroccan culture is the small minority of Moroccan authors who write in Spanish.⁵⁶ This phenomenon, however, cannot be compared to that involving the French postcolonial authors (many of whom have had their work translated into Spanish) such as Fatima Mernissi and Tahar Ben Jelloun, whose translated works amount to over thirty books. This literature has become fashionable as evidenced by the many publications dedicated to Moroccan authors who write in Spanish starting since the nineties with titles such as *La puerta de los vientos. Narradores marroquíes contemporáneos* (2004) to *¡Hay moros en la costa! Literatura marroquí fronteriza en castellano y catalán* (2014).⁵⁷

Over the last decade, the interest in Morocco and its literature has increased to such an extent that universities and institutions have published a number of historical and critical approaches to Moroccan literature, e.g., *La identidad del teatro marroquí* (1992), by Zouhir Louassini, *Aproximación al relato marroquí en lengua árabe (1930-1980)* (1998), by Fernando Ramos López, *El realismo social del relato*

marroquí (2001), by Luz García Castañón, and *La literatura marroquí contemporánea. La novela y la crítica literaria*, by Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla. All these essays were published by universities or the since disappeared Ediciones Mundo Árabe e Islam⁵⁸ of the ICMA. Anthologies such as *Voces del sur. Poesía marroquí contemporánea* (2007) and the *Antología de la poesía femenina marroquí* (2007) have also been published recently. Unlike most other Arab countries, Morocco is now represented in Spain by an array of publications covering a wide range of genres.

From 2018 Onwards

Since 1954, the date of the first publication of modern Arabic literature translated into Spanish, an average of five translations per year of contemporary and classic Arabic texts have been published. This is truly a derisory figure considering that over ten thousand books from various languages –mainly English– are translated into Spanish every year. However, having said this, it should be emphasized that the current flow of translations from Arabic to Spanish is consistently high. Quite possibly over the last twenty years, thanks in part to Mahfuz, more books have been translated from Arabic into Spanish than in the whole of the twentieth century.

If the beginnings of the translation of modern Arabic literature into Spanish were largely possible due to the support of public institutions, it was the commercial publishers who came to the fore in the 21st century. In this new phase, publishers have become increasingly interested in Arab authors, especially if they have been given awards or if their work has been translated into French or English. As a result of the launching of the International Prize for

Arabic Fiction,⁵⁹ Spanish prestigious publisher Turner launched a series of translations, *Turner Kitab*⁶⁰ with the winners or shortlisted authors.

Nevertheless, there are still institutions, such as the Escuela de Traductores de Toledo⁶¹ or Casa Árabe/Instituto Internacional de Estudios Árabes y del Mundo Musulmán⁶², which continue to have a very important role in the translation and promotion of modern Arabic literature. Today, we are witnessing a renewed interest in modern Arabic literature which has coincided with the recent phenomenon of the bestselling books *Yacoubian Building* (*El edificio Yacobián*, 2007) and *Girls of Riyadh* (*Chicas de Riad*, 2007). The speed at which these books came onto the Spanish market is worth pointing out. One possible explanation is that the book, *Girls of Riyadh*, was translated from English into Spanish. At this moment in time, besides the bestselling Arab authors, we are now seeing the arrival of “Arab authors” who have written their original texts in a European language, usually English. An example of this is *The Hakawati* (*El contador de historias*, 2008), by Rabih Alameddine. Although these books are written in English, they are presented as authentic Arabic literature so as to grab the attention of the mass media. Suffice it to say, that the criteria used for judging these books are based on the deeply ingrained orientalist clichés and stereotypes which continue to cast an exotic shadow over all Arabic literature.

Arabic literature in Spain was originally used as a historical resource in order to elucidate the unique period of Spanish history called Al-Andalus. Since the mid-twentieth century modern Arabic literature started to receive serious consideration but could not sustain itself without the support of public institutions. Either that or it became a marginalized, militant literature. Finally, the awarding of the Nobel

Prize to Mahfuz created a surge of interest in mainstream publishers and in the general public. However, apart from the recent arrival of the bestsellers, there are other signs that “Arabic literature” is becoming more and more a part of the literary field in Spain. For the first time ever, it is literature first, and then Arabic.

¹ See James Monroe, *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship. Sixteenth Century to the Present* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), p. IX.

² See Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 9.

³ Eduardo Manzano, “La creación de un esencialismo: la historia de al-Andalus en la visión del arabismo español” in Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla and Manuel Feria (eds.), *Orientalismo, exotismo y traducción* (Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2000), pp. 23-37.

⁴ Nieves Paradela Alonso, “La literatura árabe moderna en el arabismo español”, *Awraq* (XXI, 2000), pp. 221-250. Also published in

http://www.estudiosarabes.org/files/Paradela_Literatura%20árabe%20moderna.pdf

⁵ Bernabé López García, “Orientalismo y traducción en los orígenes del arabismo moderno español” in Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla y Manuel Feria García (eds.), *Orientalismo, exotismo y traducción* (Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2000), 153-171.

⁶ <http://www.eea.csic.es/>

⁷ See Miguel Hernando de Larramendi and Bárbara Azaola, “Studies in Spain of the contemporary Arab World and the Mediterranean” (British Council, 2006)

http://www.britishcouncil.org/spain_report_main_text_drf4_ingles_con_formato.pdf

⁸ This is a fascinating book – a compilation of interviews of some of the most prominent 20th century Arabists by Juan Pablo Arias Torres, Manuel Feria García and Salvador Peña, *Arabismo y traducción* (Madrid: CSIC, 2004).

⁹ Abd Allah Kannun, *al-Nubug al-magribi fi l-adab al-arabi* (Tetouan: al-Matba`a al-Mahdiyya, 1938). Re-edited by *Al-Magrib* press in Tangier, 198?.

¹⁰ Translated into Spanish by Jerónimo Carrillo Ordóñez and Mohammad Tayeddin Buzid as *El genio marroquí en la literatura árabe* and published in Larache in 1939 by Artes Gráficas Boscá. The re-edition of the 1980s includes articles written by Shakib Arsalan about *al-Nubug* published in the Tetouan newspaper *al-Wahda al-magribiyya*.

¹¹ See Calderwood, Eric. 2012. “The beginning (or end) of Moroccan history: Historiography, translation, and modernity in Ahmad B. Khalid Al-Nasiri and Clemente Cerdeira”. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 44 (3), 399-420.

¹² See Francisco Rodríguez Sierra, “La traducción de El Quijote al árabe” in *Don Quijote por tierras extranjeras* (Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2007).

¹³ See Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla and Ruth Rodríguez López, “Marruecos y España traducidos en libros” in Bernabé López García y Miguel Hernando de Larramendi (eds.), *Historia y memoria de las relaciones hispano-marroquíes. Un balance en el cincuentenario de la independencia de Marruecos* (Madrid: Ediciones del Oriente y del Mediterráneo, 2007), pp. 283-307.

- ¹⁴ See Hernando de Larramendi, Miguel, Irene González González, and Bernabé López García, eds. 2015. *El Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura. Orígenes y evolución de la diplomacia pública española hacia el mundo árabe*. Madrid: AECID.
- ¹⁵ <http://www.aecid.es/ES/biblioteca/un-poco-de-historia/biblioteca-isl%C3%A1mica-formaci%C3%B3n-y-donaciones>
- ¹⁶ Larramendi/Azaola, 2006, p. 2.
- ¹⁷ <http://institutoegipcio.es/>
- ¹⁸ Paradela, 2000, 225.
- ¹⁹ See further details in Bernabé López García, "30 años de arabismo español: el fin de la algomavaria científica (1967-1997)", *Awraq* (XVIII, 1997), pp. 11-48.
- ²⁰ See Arias Torres/Feria García/Peña, 2004, p. 10.
- ²¹ See Carmen Gómez Camarero, "La producción científica española en literatura árabe contemporánea (I)" in *Homenaje al Profesor José María Fórneas Besteiro*, vol. I (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1994), p. 172.
- ²² It appeared in the very popular series published by Espasa-Calpe.
- ²³ A novel by Nasser, *Por el camino de la libertad*, which was allegedly written in collaboration with a Spanish writer, was published in 1964.
- ²⁴ See Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla, "الأدب العربي بالإسبانية. ترجمات للعرفين", *Traduction: Approches et Théories*, Collection Sources-Cibles, Université Saint-Joseph, École de Traducteurs et d'Interprètes de Beyrouth, Beirut, Libano, 1999, pp. 403-412 and Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla, "Translating Modern Arabic Literature into Spanish", *Middle Eastern Literatures* (Routledge) 16:1 (2013), pp.88-101.
- ²⁵ López García, 1997, 42.
- ²⁶ Paradela, 2000, 230.
- ²⁷ It should be remembered that Vernet was also the translator of the first modern translation of the Koran, in 1953. He also translated *The Nights*, in 1964.
- ²⁸ Paradela, 2000, 230.
- ²⁹ <http://al-qantara.revistas.csic.es/index.php/al-qantara>
- ³⁰ Now published by Casa Árabe <http://www.awraq.es/>
- ³¹ <http://www.meaharabe.com/index.php/meaharabe>
- ³² As pointed out by Paradela, the earliest research into modern Arabic literature was done at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, such as Fernando Peral's research on Tunisian literature, in 1970. The first doctoral thesis on modern Arabic literature was by Youssef Farhat on Marun 'Abbud, in 1968. The first research project at the Universidad de Granada was by Antonio Morales on the Saudi poet 'Abdallah al-Faysal, in 1968. The first doctoral thesis at Granada, written by Mercedes del Amo and presented in 1980, was on the Egyptian novel. See Paradela, p. 234.
- ³³ This book as well as the *Introducción a la literatura árabe moderna* were both published under the *Almenara* label.
- ³⁴ Paradela, 2000, 233.
- ³⁵ Arias/Feria/Peña, 2004, 10.
- ³⁶ See Paradela, 2000, 227.
- ³⁷ See Paradela, 2000, 227.
- ³⁸ See Salvador Peña Martín, "Narrativa de la traducción", *TRANS* (1, 2005), pp. 99-114.
- ³⁹ Arias/Feria/Peña, 2004, 14.
- ⁴⁰ See María Luz Comendador et al., "The Translation of Arabic Literature into Spanish", *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* (48, 2000), pp. 115-126.
- ⁴¹ <http://www.orienteymediterraneo.com/>

⁴² Paradela, 2000, 240.

⁴³ López García, 1997, 19.

⁴⁴ The proceedings were published as *Actas de las I Jornadas de Literatura Árabe Moderna y Contemporánea* (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1991).

⁴⁵ Mercedes Del Amo, (ed), *Realidad y fantasía en Naguib Mahfuz* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1991).

⁴⁶ Pilar Lirola Delgado, *Aproximación al teatro egipcio moderno* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1990).

⁴⁷ Juan Antonio Pacheco Paniagua, *Literatura, crítica literaria y ensayo en la revista "Al-Adab"* (1953-1984) (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1990).

⁴⁸ Josefina Veglison, *Tendencias de la poesía tunecina contemporánea (1956-1990) en su marco político y social* (Alicante: Universitat de València, 1992).

⁴⁹ <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/ANQE>

⁵⁰ <http://rodin.uca.es/xmlui/handle/10498/7793>

⁵¹ Abellatif Laabi, *Anthologie de la poésie marocaine de l'indépendance à nos jours* (Paris: La Difference, 2005).

⁵² Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla, "Reseñas de prensa de la literatura árabe contemporánea traducida al español. Una literatura exótica para un público occidental", *Awraq* (XXI, 2000), pp. 51-61.

⁵³ Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla, "Panorámica de los estudios y traducciones de literatura marroquí en español" in Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla and Rosario Montoro (eds.), *El Magreb y Europa. Literatura y traducción*, (Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha 1999), pp. 327-338.

⁵⁴ Paradela, 2000, 239.

⁵⁵ <http://escueladetraductores.uclm.es/literatura-y-pensamiento-marroquies/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/NUEVAEMLE/>

⁵⁷ Some of these publications move between some sort of paternal neo orientalist approach to this

cultural phenomenon, and a certain guilt for not having contributed to the development of this

literature, as the French have done so well with their language. See Fernández Parrilla, Gonzalo. "De indígena a catalana: representaciones textuales entre lo colonial y lo postcolonial". *Alteridades imaginadas*. Ed. Ángeles Ramírez. Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2014.

⁵⁸ It is said that this series disappeared as a result of the Aznar government's lack of interest in the Arab world.

⁵⁹ <http://www.arabicfiction.org/>

⁶⁰ <http://www.turnerlibros.com/book/los-drusos-de-belgrado.html>

⁶¹ <http://www.uclm.es/escueladetraductores/>

⁶² <http://www.casaarabe-ieam.es/>