

Orientalists and Contemporary Arabic novel: Factors vs. challenges facing Anthony Calderbank while translating this literary Genre.

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Abstract:

The contemporary Arabic fiction is very recent, with its pioneers Gibran and Nu'aymah assimilating and imitating the modernization of the west in the early 20th century. They dealt with social issues, political changes and the conflicting cultural values. The translation of Arabic short stories and novels by orientalists had taken place during the 1950's.. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries world political events have attracted attention to Muslims and Arabs, who became the target of the world. These events created curiosity to tackle the Arabic literary works, mainly the novel since it depicts the social life. Anthony Calderbank is a British orientalist, who confronted linguistics as well as cultural hindrances while translating the Arabic Novel.

Key Words: Orientalists, Cotemporary Novel, literary translation, Anthony Calderbank

الملخص:

النثر العربي فنّ حديث بدأ مع جبران خليل جبران وأدباء المهجر الذين كانوا على تواصل مباشر مع الحضارة الغربية منذ بدايات القرن العشرين، تناول هؤلاء الأدباء قضايا اجتماعية وسياسية، بدأت ترجمات المستشرقين للروايات والقصص العربية منذ خمسينيات القرن العشرين، خلال القرن العشرين والواحد والعشرين دفعت أحداث سياسية كثيرة بالعرب والمسلمين إلى واجهة المشهد الأدبي الغربي، فأصبح الأدب العربي المعاصر - وخاصة الرواية التي تصوّر الواقع الاجتماعي - محطّ اهتمام الغربيين، أنطوني كالدربانك هو أحد المستشرقين الذين عنوا بالأدب العربي المعاصر، وقد واجه تحديات لسانية وثقافية أثناء ترجمته الرواية العربية، ستشرح هذه الورقة أبعاد القضية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المستشرقون - الرواية العربية المعاصرة - الترجمة الأدبية - أنطوني كالدربانك.

Introduction

It is now an inevitable fact that literature is an international means of cultural integration and exchange between the orient and the occident. In effect, there is an avalanche of orientalist seeking to translate Arab literature. The works which incorporate the translation and study of Arabic contemporary novels have the lion's share in this field. One of the most famous contemporary orientalist who has significant intercultural endeavors to translate the Arabic novel is Anthony Calderbank who has been a translator of Arabic literature since the early nineties. He has translated a number of Egyptian novels.

Translation as a paradigm of cultural contact is not as clear a concept as it might seem to be. In the last 30 years, the field has expanded considerably towards a macro-level, encompassing the cultural context as a whole. Most recent theories in social linguistics raise the question of intercultural translation; they mean hermeneutic issues rather than the problems of faithfulness. Contemporary cultural orientation deals with the relationship between knowledge production, in one culture, and the same information being transferred and interpreted in another. As a level of interaction, cultural translation takes place whenever an alien experience is internalized and rewritten in the culture where the experience is received. However, it is often found out by theorists that there is always a gap, a point that is difficult to be culturally transmitted into the target culture. Consequently, the cultural hindrances in Arabic-English translation took place. Calderbank argues that Intercultural translation here can help people understand better the alien cultural elements as long as competent translators keep trying to overcome these hindrances, which are related to the field of translation. According to what has been mentioned the milestone of this work problem lies in:

- ❖ What are the main reasons that led the orientalist to translate the Arabic novel and what are the challenges they encountered?

1-The contemporary Arabic Novel as a Modern Literary Genre:

A common theme in the modern Arabic novel is the study of family life with obvious resonances of the wider family of the Arabic world. Many of the novels have been unable to avoid the politics and conflicts of the region with war often acting as background to intimate family dramas. The works of Nagib Mahfuz depict life in Cairo, and his Cairo Trilogy, describing the struggles of a modern Cairene family across three generations, won him a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988. He was the first Arabic writer to win the prize. The contemporary Arabic Novel unlike poetry, is a very recent development in Arabic literary expression. The Arabic novel is largely the product of the modernization or Westernization that had begun some fifty or

seventy-five years earlier. Its first authors were, in the main, young expatriates who suddenly found themselves face to face with the modern ways of Europe and America.

For the immigrants and for the student in New York, Paris, or London, it was a time for assimilation and interpretation, without the constraints of a society that had no meaning for them save that they belonged to it. What Europe provided to the American expatriate of the 1920's, America provided to the Lebanese and Syrian immigrants of the same period. In the words of the last surviving member of their circle, Gibran, and Nu' aymah, their message concerned new forms and techniques, new ideas.

They had discovered a whole new world to convey through Arabic literature. Who were better equipped than the returning students to tackle the intriguing, indeed inspiring, problems arising out of the confrontation of the traditional, conventional life by the alien, yet more rational, modern ways? To these nascent writers no problem was more pressing than the issue of social change and conflicting cultural values. Here was the breeding ground of the modern Arabic novel, an experimental, adolescent novel. It was declamatory in style, direct in its message, proudly and unabashedly autobiographical in its approach (N. Sfeir 1966).

During the 19th century, a revival took place in Arabic literature, along with much of Arabic culture, and is referred to in Arabic as "Al-Nahda", which means "the Renaissance". This resurgence in writing was mainly restricted to Syria, Egypt and Lebanon until the 20th century when it spread to other countries in the region. This Renaissance was not only felt within the Arab world but also beyond, with a great interest in the translating of Arabic works into European languages.

Throughout the 20th century, Arabic writers in both poetry and prose have reflected the changing political and social climate of the Arab world in their work. Anti-colonial themes were prominent early in the 20th century, with writers continuing to explore the region's relationship with the West until the present day. Internal political upheaval has also been a challenge, with some writers suffering censorship. There are many contemporary Arabic writers, such as Mahmoud saeed (Iraq) who wrote *Bin Barka Ally*, and *I Am the One Who Saw (Saddam City)*. Other contemporary writers include Sonallah Ibrahim and Abdul Rahman Munif, who were imprisoned by the state for their anti-government work.

At the same time, others who had written works supporting or praising governments were promoted to positions of authority within cultural bodies. Non-fiction writers and academics have also produced political polemics and criticisms aiming to re-shape Arabic politics. Some of the best known are Taha Hussein's *The Future of Culture in Egypt*, which was an

important work of Egyptian Nationalism, and the works of Nawal El-Saadawi who campaigns for women's rights (Zeidan 1995).

Two distinct trends can be found in the "nahda" period of revival. The first was a neo-classical movement which sought to rediscover the literary traditions of the past, and was influenced by traditional literary genres—such as the *maqama*—and works like *One Thousand and One Nights*. In contrast, a modernist movement began by translating Western modernist works, primarily novels into Arabic.

The translation of Arabic short stories and novels only really began after the Second World War; before that time there were few examples to be found of Arabic fiction appearing in Western dress. Since the 1950's the number of English translation has considerably increased, particularly of Arabic short stories, reflecting in this respect the dominant position which the short story has attained in modern Arabic literature. The total amount of modern Arabic fiction is interesting mainly as far as the novel is concerned. The writers who have been translated frequently have been mainly Egyptians (eg: Tawfiq al-Hakim, Yahya Haqqi, Yusuf Idris, Najib Mahfuz, Mahmud Taymur), although of Gibran Khalil Gibran and Mikha'il Nu'aymah have also received much attention (Altoma 2005)

Anthony Calderbank is an Orientalist English translator of contemporary Arabic literature. He studied Arabic and Persian at Manchester University and taught Arabic in Cairo and at Salford University, UK. He has translated myriads of novels and two collections of short stories from Arabic into English, including works by Naguib Mahfouz, Sonallah Ibrahim, Yousef Almohaimeed and Miral Al Tahawi, which have been published and distributed internationally. He has facilitated workshops on translation for British Council and the Emirates Airline International Festival of Literature (Mubarak, 2006).

2-Orientalism and the Translation of Arabic Literature:

Orientalism is an academic term, used in art history, literary studies, geography, and cultural studies.; it is described as a critical approach to representation of the Orient; of the Eastern culture of the Middle East, North Africa, South West Asia, and South East Asia, represented as "European knowledge of the Orient" created by artists and writers from Western Europe. In particular, Orientalist painting, representing "the Middle East", was a genre of Academic Art in the 19th century. Likewise, Western European literatures treated and dealt with the Orient and oriental things; the cultural influence was notable in the application of Asian visual styles to genres of Western art, especially in architecture and the decorative arts (Lary, 2006).

Since the publication of *Orientalism* (1978), by Edward Said, the academic discourse of critical theorists featured the term Orientalism in

applications particular to the variety of cultural Imperialism imposed upon the societies of the orient which is the cultural hegemony that politically justifies Western imperialism. The praxis of cultural imperialism reduces those societies as culturally static and intellectually undeveloped; the fabrication of cultural superiority is that Oriental culture is a thing that can be studied, depicted, and reproduced. Implicit to the orientalist fabrication is the culturally opposite idea that Western society is developed, rational, flexible, and thereby superior, whilst Oriental societies are inferior for being undeveloped, irrational, and inflexible (Said,1979).

Arabic literature in English has a long history; one of the first novels written by an Arab was Ameen Rihani's *The Book of Khalid* (1911), and Khalil Gibran achieved a following as writer of poetry and prose, including *The Prophet* (1923). But Arab literary works in English remained relatively few and far between until the 1980s. In Britain, Egyptian author Waguih Ghali's *Beer in the snooker club* (1964) quietly took on a cult status and is still appearing in reprints, whilst Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's *Hunters in a narrow street* (1960) was widely translated and was reprinted in 1990. A breakthrough in popularity came with Ahdaf Soueif's novels *in the eye of the sun* (1992) and *the map of love* (1999) which was shortlisted for the Booker prize, as was Hisham Matar's *in the country of men* in 2006.

From the late 1960s Arabic literature became better known to English readers through translations into English, with Heinemann publishing translations of the most prominent authors, including Naguib Mahfouz, Yusuf Idris and Tayyeb Salih. Denys Johnson-Davies led the way in translating novels, plays, short stories and poetry over a period of more than 40 years; this work has been of key importance in establishing a readership for literature translated from Arabic. The American University in Cairo Press also played a vital role in supporting the translation of Arabic literature, later joined by a range of publishers in the UK, including Saqi Press, Quartet, the Women's Press, Garnet, Riad El-Rayyes, and Bloomsbury, as well as Banipal magazine.

The award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz in 1988 raised the profile of Arabic literature in English translation, and a wider range of titles became available, alongside works written by Arab authors in French as well as in Arabic. The establishment of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2007 has also done much to raise the profile of Arabic writing from across the Arab world.

Although relatively few Arab novelists wrote in English before the 1990s, Arab writers used English to reach out to an international readership through works of history, literary criticism and biography, as well as journals and essays. Among them, Raja Shehadeh first published *The Third Way* in

1982. He has continued, steadfastly, to describe life in the occupied West Bank to the present day, gaining prominence and international recognition.

Edward Said's most important work, *Orientalism*, appeared in 1978. Said continued to write widely on literature, music, and the Palestinian experience until his death in 2003. Palestine occupied a central place in Arab writing in English, until 2003 when public opposition to the war on Iraq also brought greater attention to writing from Iraq. Notable was *The Baghdad blog* of Salam Pax (published in book form in 2003) which captured the imagination of a global audience as Baghdad's people awaited the onslaught of bombs to bring an end to the regime of Saddam Hussein and the beginning of a new era of instability and violence. Ahdaf Soueif added works of political analysis to her literary output. The growing readership for Arabic poetry in translation was also linked not only to its intrinsic appeal and artistic expression, but also to its political context, including the Lebanese civil war and the 1982 Israeli war in Lebanon, and the continuing Palestinian experience of exile and occupation.

Whilst relatively few Arabs used English as a means of expression until recently, many more Arab writers have written in French, partly because of the length and intensity of French colonial rule in North Africa. Algerian writers published novels in French from the 1920s onwards, but from the outbreak of the Algerian war of independence in 1954, the novel in French became important as a means to express Algerian rejection of French colonialism. This period marked the birth of a vibrant and enduring French-language literature in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria – and many of these works have become available in English translation. As well as Kateb Yacine and Mohamed Dib, Moroccan novelist Tahar Ben Jelloun, and Algerian feminist Assia Djebar, are among the authors best known to English readers. Since 11 September 2001, there has been a sharp increase in the number and range of North African novels translated into English, both from Arabic and from French (Williams).

In this context we can mention: Kateb Yacine: *Nedjma*. Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia, 1991 (c. 1961) Mohamed Dib: *The savage night*. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. Tahir Wattar: *The earthquake*. London: Saqi, 2000. Anouar Benmalek: *The lovers of Algeria*. Saint Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf, 2001. Yasmina Khadra: *What the day owes the night*. London: Vintage, 2011. Ahlem Mosteghanemi: *Memory in the flesh*. London: Arabia, 2008. In the last decade numerous works by Arab authors have stood out on a world stage, and translations from Arabic or French have moved away from the margins. The Shubbak Festival will provide an opportunity to reflect on the changing reception of this literature in English. A key feature is the growing confidence and diversity of expression among younger writers of Arab origin

in Britain, Europe and America, alongside those in the Arab world who are forging their own voice, and exploiting technological change, in ways that mark their difference from previous generations of writers. (Claudia Rot Pierpont, 2010)

3-Factors Laying behind the Orientalists' Increasing Interest in Translating the Arabic Contemporary Novels

More than ever before, novels by Arab writers are reaching new audiences in the west. More of their work is being translated into English and there are also growing numbers of Arabs who choose to write in English or French. Anyone here can ask the question: why this contemporary western interest in the Arabic novel? To answer this question properly we should tackle this issue from the political side. For centuries the Arabs have constituted for the western world an alien and often confrontational entity, a quintessential "other". The posture can be traced back at least to the Crusades; the religious war between Muslims and Christians over the holy lands, which caused antagonism and hatred for centuries. Recent events like the Rushdie affaire when Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* caused controversy. Following the novel's publication in London in 1988, the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran issued an edict condemning the author and his publishers to death for blasphemy. This led the British Muslims to react vigorously through riots, fire bombings, book burnings in different places in Britain, in order to demonstrate their refusal to what they considered mocking to their faith. The Britons transmitted the Muslim's reactions - riots and demonstrations - in a negative way. They characterized Muslims as "barbarians" "uncivilized" "fanatics" "medieval fundamentalists" besides they compared them to Nazis.

Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries world events had attracted attention to Muslims who become the focus of the world, for example the Saudi embargo or the 1973 oil crisis, when the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries or the OAPEC declared an oil embargo as a reaction to US harbouring Israel in Yom Kippur War. In addition, the Iranian Revolution of 1979, when the Monarchical rule of Mohammad Reza shah Pahlavi collapsed and the republican form of government took place, this popular revolution had shocked the British and the west which were astonished how these Muslims of Tehran were shown on television all over the world. Besides, the Salman Rushdie affair of 1989, as cited before, made the west believe that Muslims were radicals and barbarians. Then The Iran/Iraq war in 1980/1988 and the Gulf War 1990/1991 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. Both were armed conflicts of Muslim nations which also attracted the attention of the world to Muslims. Next, the eruption of Bosnia in 1992/1995, where the conflict between ethnic groups resulted in genocide committed by the Serbs

against the Muslims of Bosnia, in addition to the war on Iraq or the second Gulf War of 2003 have participated in creating transnational Muslim solidarity on one hand and started developing an anti-Islam sentiments within the British and more widely the world on other hand.

What made the situation harsher was the 9/11 events, when Islamic extremist group al-Qaeda hijacked four airliners and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States, on September 11, 2001. Moreover, the 7/7 London Bombings when four young Muslims born and bred in Britain committed a series of suicide bombings against their home country in the 7th of July 2005. All in all, these world events led the occident to be curious to know about the orient and to read about the Muslim culture. The most literary genre which depicts the lifestyle, society and beliefs of the Arab Muslim community is the contemporary novel. This explains how the world political events oriented the west towards the Arabic literary works.

Besides to the political drives, one cannot ignore the cultural side. Arabic is one of the world's great languages. Spoken by more than 400 million people, it has been the vehicle of many significant contributions to the development of science and culture, from the earliest odes of the pre-Islamic poets through to the cutting-edge research of the philosophers and mathematicians of Islam's golden age, to the novels of Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz. Arabic is also one of the official languages of the United Nations and was recently identified as one of the ten most important languages for the UK's future.

Anthony Calderbank said that in addition to learning the Arabic language he had also learned a lot about colonialism, the media and the nature of modern, global power relations. That's why he believed more people should learn Arabic. A study of Arabic opens up endless possibilities and opportunities for those who embark upon it. A rich and sophisticated language, spoken in many varieties throughout the Middle East and North Africa, it is both challenging and rewarding to learn. A knowledge of Arabic is instrumental to gaining a real understanding of the peoples, societies and politics of the Arab world, and accessing a range of employment opportunities in the region's finance, media and commercial sectors. As its social, political and commercial importance increases, demand to learn Arabic is set to grow. (Calderbank, 2015)

As part of events for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF) that took place in Amman, Yasir Suleiman, Professor of Modern Arabic studies at Cambridge University and Chair of the IPAF Trustees, gave a talk on "Orientalism and the Translation of Arabic Literature," hosted by the Columbia University Middle East Research Center. Yasir Suleiman, a prolific writer and a fellow of King's College London, said more Arabic works were translated into English because of the Arab world's cultural, historical and

geographical closeness to the West, and due to Westerners' interest in the "Orient". He explained that the choices of Arabic novels translated into English and other European languages are governed by Western indulgence in Orientalism. "Orientalism has become a prison for translation," he argued. Referring many times to Edward Said's widely read book "Orientalism" (1978).

In an interview with The Jordan Times following the lecture, Suleiman said there is "professionalism" in translation from Arabic into English now with translators becoming more aware of the concept of Orientalism and its cultural connotations. "The oriental issue is no longer perceived, received and handled as it used to be," he said. Again asked about the reasons behind Arabs outnumbering the Chinese in producing translated fiction, Suleiman said that "Arabs are at the gates to Europe and are more culturally and historically linked with the Europeans." However, Suleiman attributed the reason also to the rivalry between the Arab and Western worlds. "We are politically at odds with the West, which is so much interested in knowing about the Arab world through its literature."

Suleiman is chair of trustees at the International Prize for Arabic Fiction which, he said, aims at encouraging translation of Arabic literature into English and other languages and raising awareness about the Arabic novel. Despite the fact that Arabic is a major language, and considered a major world literature by many, Suleiman suggests that there are factors in the publishing field of the English speaking world that go beyond "orientalism" when determining how "translatable" a book actually is. "Publishing is a commercial enterprise; publishers are looking for books that will sell with their target audience. They need to take into account the horizontal expectation of their own readers in English. Orientalism may be one of those expectations, but there are other factors (Omari, 2014).

4-The Translation challenges Confronting Orientalists in General and Anthony Calderbank in Particular:

Translating a literary work is a serious challenge. The translator somehow has to move a text into the target language while preserving as much as possible of the quality and character, the 'spirit' of the original. A tall order that involves the translator in the tricky task of carrying the distinctive character and rhythms of a work, its style, tone, imagery and emphases, from the original language into a quite other language that imposes its own demands of style, pace, and rhythms. Basic questions arise: is everything in the original to be translated into the target language? To what extent should the translator respect the language and idioms of a particular historical period? On the one hand lies the danger of alienating, or even baffling, the contemporary reader with mystifying idioms and references,

while on the other hand, 'updating' runs the risk of hatching hideous anachronisms. (Minogue, 2016)

Before embarking on the analysis, explanation and discussion of further controversial matter on this field it would be far more worthwhile to define translation so as to put a positive gloss on the entire study, put in simple meaning/definition, it is the act, process, or result of changing from one form or language into another. Therefore, one may classify the main hindrances of translation, which affect the quality of the translation outcome into: lexical hindrances, prosodic hindrances, structural hindrances, and cultural hindrances.

In the aftermath of having the definition of translation it would be of a pivotal importance to kick-start explanation by further concentration on structural and semantic troubles. When having to translate a text from the source language into the target language those translators have some sort of misunderstanding over the text they deal with. One should understand both semantics and syntax have a large role in order to be able to deal with translation without any problem (Ali Almaghary, 2008).

All translations require excellent knowledge of the target and source languages, as well as an understanding of the cultural background and context into which a document is being translated. However, in the case of literary translation, various concerns, such as subjective interpretation of the original text, distinguish this translation process from that involved in non-literary translations. However, a lot of translations of many novels are resulting in books different from the original to describe the same thought in a different language seems to give it a whole different life that is richer and more creative. Below are some of the predicaments facing novel translation, along with recommendations that would lead to a successful translation process.

Language as a Creative Weapon

The creative translation involves synthesizing a series of elements, such as rhythm, punctuation, syntax, mood, and meaning (or, in other words, content and form). According to Ziaul Haque of Sylhet International University, one of the main problems affecting literary translators is that they forget that the various elements work together in a dialectical relationship within a literary work. That relationship needs to be kept, reproduced, or approximated in the target translation in order for the translated work to closely resemble the source text.

Two Languages, Two Worlds

When the source and target languages are spoken by people from different cultural groups and backgrounds, then meanings, feelings, and reactions to literary texts can sometimes be entirely different from those

created within the source audience. American anthropologist and linguist Edward Sapir, who developed the theory of linguistic relativism, believed that no two languages could ever represent the same social reality, as each language creates its own world and worldview. In this way, the task of recreating the effect or the feelings emanating from the original readings in a target audience becomes infinitely more complex when addressing other cultural contexts.

On a Practical Level

Apart from these theoretical and philosophical matters, literary translators often face very complicated problems in practice. An example of this is dealing with literary license, which allows authors to break grammatical rules and create entirely new words or even languages. Another problem arises when translating characters' names, especially when these are meant to reflect an aspect of their personality. A good example can be found in the Harry Potter series, with characters such as Mad-Eye Moody, or even Tom Marvolo Riddle, which is an anagram of "I am Lord Voldemort." (Difficulties of Literary Translation)

Conceptualization of Culture

Translators should be aware of and well acquainted with the cultural dimensions of the environment from which the source language text is taken. Actually, looking at culture as a construct, we come into some fundamental issues of definition. The hindrance here is that there is no commonly agreed upon definition of culture. Culture, then, is a cumulative experience, which includes knowledge, belief, morals, art, traditions, and any habits acquired by a group of people in a society. Culture also includes the total system of habits and behavior of which language is an essential subset. Generally speaking, one culture should have one language. However, it happens sometimes for a single language to cross several culture borders. English for instance, has become the dominating and official language of societies having different cultures.

Having attempted to offer definitions and conceptualization of culture, what one can then say is that the relationship between culture and translation is strong and durable whereas translation is an essential means through which people can get access to the cultures of the other nations. Translation therefore deals with the transfer by the translator of concepts which belong to one culture and which are communicated by the linguistic system of that culture into another culture using the latter's linguistic system.

Hindrances related to intercultural translation.

Translation theorists have noted many hindrances in relation to intercultural translation. It has been noted that the complexity lies in the fact that what is considered culturally acceptable to one group of people can be

regarded as totally strange and mysterious to another. For instance, "In the Muslim Arab society, it is lawful for a man to marry up to four wives if he can treat them equally and fairly, whereas in the Christian West, polygamy is prohibited". Polygamy, thus, is strange and unacceptable to the people of the West because normally it never happens in their society and it is by no means part of their culture.

As for translation, these differences among cultures represent an area of difficulty, the degree of which depends on whether the languages involved are close or remote culturally. This difficulty often becomes unavoidable simply because the culturally emotive terms of the message drop some or all of their connotative meaning when processed by translators. Consequently, they do not elicit the expected response as they do from source language speakers. In this case, the translator should use compensation to make the picture look clearer.

As far as intercultural Arabic-English translation is concerned, suppose one comes across the English term *owl* in text, which is to be translated into Arabic. The term *owl* refers to a universal creature i.e. bird. The difficulty lies in the fact that, in English, it stands for or carries positive connotations (wisdom and grace), but in Arabic it is a symbol of pessimism and has other negative associations.

Untranslatability

Untranslatability reflects the area where intercultural equivalence does not exist, intercultural non-equivalence which can cause untranslatability arises when a situational feature is functionally relevant to the source language text, but fully absent from the target language text in which the target language culture is rooted. From Arabic-English intercultural translation perspective, examples can elucidate the issue of translatable versus untranslatable terms. These examples include: *سحور saHuur* (a meal eaten before the dawn for fasting); *خالوة khalwah* (unmarried man and woman found in a place where there is nobody else). The difficulty in translating these words is due to lexical gaps resulting from the cultural differences between the two languages. (*Salem Bahameed*)

All the above hindrances were those facing the translators in general, however, the coming ones are going to be those confronting Anthony Calderbank while translating some Arabic novels. Calderbank worked first on a novel entitled "The Tent" by the Egyptian novelist, Miral Al-Tahawy. The novel deals with a topic that is not often discussed — the patriarchal bedouin system that controls women's lives and forces them to live in a very restricted world. The topic, however, was not the only obstacle facing Calderbank. The language that Al-Tahawy used was poetic, indirect with many elements from

archaic classical Arabic. "With Miral, the desire is to understand the text," he explained.

He said that he had faced another problem in translating "Blue Aubergine," another novel by the same author. He said that the heroine, though telling a story that happened almost five decades earlier, uses the future tense instead of the past. "I don't think this is acceptable," he commented. There was additional confusion since the heroine was never given a name in the novel. "It's a constant battle," Calderbank said about the translating process. He said that in translating the novel, it was sometimes impossible to choose between words or feelings to convey those words. He himself chooses constant negotiations with the authors themselves in hopes of getting the essence of what they meant. "I ask them what they meant by using a certain word. Sometimes getting to know the author personally helps a lot."

Calderbank has translated novels by Sonallah Ibrahim, Miral Al-Tahawy and Nagib Mahfouz as well as a collection of children's short stories about the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). He has just completed translating a novel, "Traps of the Scents" by the Saudi writer Yousif Al-Mohaimed; he is now working on another novel by the same writer entitled "The Bottle." When he worked on Sonallah Ibrahim's novels, he found them easy to translate. The books are about the Egyptian middle class which Calderbank has a firsthand knowledge from his years in Cairo.

In his latest work translating the Saudi novelist Al-Mohaimed, Calderbank had also to be aware of the nature of Saudi society. He was unable to enter the Saudi social system as easily as he did the Egyptian one. He finds Saudis more cautious in dealing with foreigners and also less cooperative. He has trouble about understanding the dynamics of Saudi relationships and because of that, he is having trouble with Al-Mohaimed's "The Bottle."

Conclusion

Eventually, Language reflects the interests, ideas, customs, and other cultural aspects of a community. The vocabulary of a language manifests the culturally important areas of a group of people in a particular setting whether religious, aesthetic, social, and environmental, among others. Arabic for instance, has a variety of names for dates, camels, swords, horses, rain, winds, etc. English, however, has a variety of linguistic signs associated with the sea as English-speaking people are continuously exposed to it in their environment. This makes us say that lexical items of different cultures may have different functions and meaning. This is determined by elements peculiar to the environment where these items exist. So, the main hindrance that could face Orientalists while translating the Arabic novels is the cultural

difference. Literature can change the world. But, as Al Aswany has pointed out, “literature does something much more important—it changes us.” Contemporary Arabic literature—which is not a monolithic literature but a series of imaginative works by individuals who happen to be Egyptian, Libyan, Syrian, Moroccan, Lebanese, and so on, twenty-two nations strong—is one of the few reliable forces working to impel these varied countries toward a cultural (and perhaps even a political) openness, in which Arab writers will one day be able to write about anything at all, this is the main reason behind the overwhelming interest of the orientalists in the Arabic literature in general and the contemporary novel in particular.

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