

Yasmin Hosny¹

STEREOTYPES IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION: EGYPTIAN LITERATURE TRANSLATED INTO SPANISH

ABSTRACT

Studying Orientalism and Imperialism, both E. Said (2003) and R. Kabbani (1994) shed a light on the existing relation between the concept of power and the exotic images of the Orient; a link that influences the choice of what to translate. The exotic images are of academic interest, if nothing else, as they have always found their way into literature. The most relevant case remains undoubtedly *The Thousand and One Nights*. Pursuing the translation's stream of Arabic literature into European languages, Kabbani (1994: 129) affirms that the choice of the Arabic novels in this respect depends on the impact of the social conditions they describe or criticize.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the case of the Egyptian literature translated into Spanish during the era of globalization. Therefore, it aims to analyze the principal social and cultural characteristics of some modern and contemporary Egyptian narrative translated into Spanish to determine to which extent the choice of the translated works depends on breaking the traditional idea about the Egyptian society and its components. The method followed is descriptive; therefore this paper traces the trend in the publishing industry in dealing with literature translated from oriental societies, namely Egyptian literature translated into Spanish.

A thorough investigation of the above elements will allow weighing the impact of globalization, with its wide perspective of intercultural communication and understanding: does this high level of communication clear the way for more conscience and concern towards the other, or does it lead to more isolation?

Keywords: stereotypes, translation, globalization, Egyptian literature

1. Introduction

Studying Orientalism and Imperialism, both E. Said (2003) and R. Kabbani (1994) shed a light on the relation between the concept of power and the production of exotic images or stereotypes concerning the Orient. These images, infiltrated into literature, influence also the choice for literary translation. The most relevant case in this respect is, no doubt, *The Thousand and One Nights*. Following the translation's stream of Arabic literature into European languages, Kabbani (ibid: 130) affirms that the choice of the novels to be translated is based on the critical view it sheds on the community it represents. However, the nature of the relation between stereotypes

¹ Spanish Language and Literature Department, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, PO Box 12613. University Street, Giza- Cairo. Egypt; dra.yasmin_hosny@hotmail.com

and translation forces us to investigate the historical roots of those orientalist images, established in Europe in general, and in Spain in particular, before going further.

2. Discourse about the orient: orientalism in Europe

In her book *Imperial Fictions. Europe's Myths of Orient*, Rana Kabbani depicts the inherited representations or stereotypes about the Orient, which constitute the famous discourse of the West. That discourse was elaborated to facilitate the exploration of the East, and consequently its occupation in order to control its wealth (Kabbani 1994: 12). The same ideas of dominion and subjection are reiterated by E. Said in his famous *Orientalism*, where he explains the contribution of this discipline as a discourse about the Orient in the classification of the Orientals into intellectual categories and unchangeable essences, easily subjected to European civilizers (Said 2003: 11).

Tracing the history of discourse about the Orient, Kabbani thinks it goes back to the Middle Ages (Kabbani op.cit.: 14). Said, on the contrary, says it can also be observed in Greco Latin Literature and Historiography. He even points to the fact that Rome and Greece pointed to the difference between races, regions, nations and minds. However, he assures that the interest in the Orient had its own classification and hierarchy. According to Herodotus and Alexander, there were known and unknown regions yet to be conquered (Said op.cit.: 91). In other words, it is obvious that political and economic power, the observation and the production of stereotypes and finally colonialism were always a constant factor in the history of the relation between the East and the West.

Both authors discuss the existence of mental barriers, imaginary divisions that lasted during many centuries. Nevertheless, the nature of this notion acquires a hostile tone after the expansion of Islam in the south of the Mediterranean, a region which changes from being a zone of commerce and communication into a dangerous place:

When in the third decade of the seventh century the newly Islamicised armies of Arabia launched their assault on Byzantium, they struck a fatal blow at the Mediterranean fulcrum around which the empires of Europe had turned [...] Thus the Mediterranean came to be conspicuously remote to them, and the East seemed more and more to be the enemy (Kabbani, 1994: 14).

This was the start of a new stage for producing stereotyped designs of the Orient, in order to reassure the western self respect and to model the moral western values in opposition to the Islamic and the Arabic *savagery*. The idea of the voluptuous East was elaborated during this stage. The Islamic sensual paradise was frequently compared to the angelic Christian concept of Heaven (Kabbani op.cit: 16).

Accompanied with fear of the oriental danger, those stereotypes were inherited from one period to another. However, during the Renaissance which witnessed the rise of the Ottoman Empire, another dimension was brought to stage: the rich and lecherous Orient. According to Said, the production of stereotypes was a strategy to combat the fear of the unknown making it more familiar: *the European representation of the Muslim, Ottoman, or Arab was always a way of controlling the redoubtable Orient, a sort of domestication of the exotic* (Said 1995: 60).

The *Harem of the Sultan* becomes the most popular metaphor applied to the Orient. Erotic descriptions start to invade literature, which becomes, according to Kabbani, a tool of

manipulation in the hands of imperial ideologies and its economic ambitions. An illustrative example for this type of literature during that period as Kabbani mentions is Shakespeare's famous *Othello*, the noble savage who tries to refine his wild nature but fails in the end. Another example is the case of Cleopatra, a symbol of destructive seduction that ruins the brave Mark Anthony with her *magic of the Orient* and decadent morals (Kabbani op.cit.: 20).

During the 18th century, the story takes another turn when the translations of *The Thousand and One Nights* started to invade Europe. As the first translation of these stories, by Antoine Galland, was received in France with *great enthusiasm*, the romantic period exaggerated to the maximum the images of the Orient. *The Thousand and One Nights* and *Arabian Nights* became a kind of literary fever and the East was perceived as an irrational world of freedom, luxury, richness and sensuality. Nothing is mentioned about misery and poverty. This exaggeration is pointed out by Said as a further *orientalization of the Orient* (Said op. cit.: 31).

Among the most famous translations discussed by Kabbani (1994: 45) are the English versions of E. Lane (1883) and R. Burton (1884) of *The Thousand and One Nights* and *Arabian Nights* respectively. Their opposite depictions described, on the one hand, the ignorance and superstition of the Orient, and its sensuality, on the other. Both texts introduce an imperial vision about a decadent Orient which imposes the consequent European supervision of the Orientals. It is very significant, no doubt, that the descriptions of the manners and traditions of the Egyptians start to appear since the beginning of the romantic period, while the British troops invade Egypt by the end of the 19th century.

Said also draws the attention to the role played by the *Description de l' Egypte* (1809-1828), considered as the greatest achievement of Napoleon's expedition on Egypt that helped the European to collect the most precise information about the country during that period. Said thinks that this phase represents a process of *metamorphosis* that he describes as a step forward from imagination to practice and from discourse to imperial institution (Said op. cit. 72).

Referring to the 20th century, Kabbani (1994: 129-136) highlights the role played by authors like Naipaul, whose origins are oriental, but had received European education. Their writings represent in general a critical attitude towards their original societies. In that way, Kabbani reiterates the persistence of the discourse about the Orient in some aspects of literature in the 20th century. The same issue is expressed by Said, explaining the role of the movements of Independence and the subsequent oriental reaction against Imperialism in the production of a new defiant image of the East:

By the time of the Bandung Conference in 1955 the entire Orient had gained its political independence from the Western empires and confronted a new configuration of imperial powers, the United States and Soviet Union. Unable to recognize 'its' Orient in the new Third World, Orientalism now faced a challenging and politically armed Orient (Said 1995: 104).

Faced with this new situation, orientalist had two options: either to *carry on as if nothing had happened* or to *adapt the old ways* to this new situation. But as they strongly believe the Orient never changes, they could only choose the first option.

Summarizing, we could say that the relation between stereotypes, translation and literature has been controlled most of the time by the concept of power. Both translation and literature have played an important role in the representation of the image of the oriental *other* in Europe in general. Nevertheless, Spain has always been considered as a special case. Before moving into the recent status of the relation between translation and stereotypes, a brief analysis of Spanish Orientalism seems to be necessary.

3. Spanish orientalism: a special case?

In the introduction to the Spanish translation of his book, Said (2003: 9) highlights the different nature of the notion of Orientalism in Spain, which, in his opinion, represents an obvious exception to the context of the general European model of this discipline. However, he points out the rich but yet complex image of Islam in Spain, which forms an essential part of the Spanish culture and is not only a distant external force that has to be fought. The contrast between Spanish Orientalism, on the one hand, and that of the English and French one on the other is supposed to be huge, due to the period of common living of Islam with the Spanish culture. However, Said points out to the complicated relation between the ideology of Catholic Spain and the Jewish/Muslim past, which has been suppressed during a long time.

According to Ferial García and Fernández Parrilla (2000: 13), this complicated relation mentioned by Said represents the two main streams of the Spanish Orientalism: Arabism – that refers to the *Andalus* and Africanism – which refers to the relation of Spain as a colonial force with Morocco. The existence of an *interior Islam*, in the opinion of Manzano Moreno (2000: 30), is the reason for *orientalizing* Spain's own cultural legacy. The splendid image is thus related to the Arabic period inside Spain, while the decadent one begins with the expulsion of Muslims to the north of Africa, where their simple existence begins to acquire a hostile image.

Miguel Angel de Bunes I Barra (1989: 67) also thinks that the change of balance in the power on both extremes of the Mediterranean is very significant in this respect, especially after the rise of the Ottoman Empire. Arabs or moors in particular become the enemy. Their description recalls the stereotypes of decadence, superstition, treason, bestiality and lust, which appear frequently in European Orientalism.

Lily Litvak's study about Islamic Exotism in Spain highlights another dimension of Arabism: architectonic exotism. The author points out the appraisal of Islamic architecture in many Spanish writings like the works of Azorín, Manuel Reina and Francisco Villaespesa (1985: 49).

In other words, we can say that Spanish Orientalism does not ignore the traditional stereotypes of European Orientalism. On the contrary, it surely adds to the same old stereotypes. Instead of criticizing only a *distant other*, it points out the advantages and the disadvantages of a *close other*. The question now should be: what sort of criteria does translation of Arabic literature into Spanish follow? Do the same stereotypes common to the European image about the Orient still exist? If so, do they represent a must for the choice of novels to translate? In order to answer these questions, we should have a close look into the translation of Arabic literature into Spanish.

4. The translation of Arabic literature into Spanish

In one of his most important studies about orientalism and translation, Carbonell I Cortés (1997: 172) determines three crucial factors for the accessibility of any translation in a certain receiving culture:

1. The existence of academic research and investigation discipline.
2. The level of interest in the argument.
3. The public demand in the receiving culture.

One of the most relevant issues that draw our attention in the case of translation of Arabic literature into Spanish is the translation of *The Thousand and One Nights* into Spanish. Due to the reasons previously mentioned, medieval Spanish writings –as well as oriental literature famous in Europe during the former period were lately rediscovered. During the first half of the 20th century, the attention of translation was more focused on Arabic – Spanish cultural legacy related to academic research (Carbonell I Cortés op.cit: 179). The translation of modern and contemporary Arabic literature into Spanish only starts during the second half of that century with two novels by Egyptian writers, *Los días* (Taha Hussein) and *Diario de un fiscal rural* (Tawfiq Al Hakim), both translated by Emilio García Gómez in 1954 and 1955 respectively.

Carbonell I Cortés (Op. cit.: 178) distinguishes three levels of Arabic literary works translated into Spanish during this period:

1. Works that reflect the modern ideals of their authors educated in the West, as Tawfiq Al Hakim and Taha Hussein.
2. Works that express the typical images of the Orient interpreted by the West, like *The Thousand and One Nights*.
3. Works about the Muslim Spain or the Andalus like *El Collar de la Paloma* (The Pigeon's Collar) by Ibn Hazm.

No doubt, after the Nobel Prize awarded to Naguib Mahfouz in 1988, the translation of contemporary Arabic literature began to gain more ground, especially the novels of Mahfouz.

5. Translation in the era of globalization

During the previous centuries, the concept of power, including both political and economic aspects, has been intimately related to the production of stereotypes about the other. The manipulation of literature and translation has been applied as a weapon for the propagation of predetermined images of the Orient as discussed above. However, by the end of the 20th century and throughout the past twelve years of the 21st, the political map of the whole world has

obviously changed, introducing new concepts and new centers of power. Under all these circumstances, how would the relation between translation of Arabic literature into Spanish and stereotypes look like?

In his article about globalization, culture of the other and translation, M. El Madkouri (2003) discusses the relation between these three concepts. From his point of view, globalization is supposed to be a means of *aperture*, an elimination of cultural barriers and *learning*, while Ecology (as the part of Sociology that studies the relation between human groups and their physical and social environment) reflects concepts of *criticism*, *conservation*, *identity*, and consequently *individualism* that could only be communicated through translation. Hence, globalization, in the wide meaning of the word, should enable more understanding and compromise, whereas the nature of the interaction between human groups and their societies tends to be more critical and conservative, especially concerning *identity*. Nevertheless, *learning*, according to the author, is the duty of the party that performs globalization, not the one who receives its consequences; it's always the *other* who has to learn. This issue is a matter of *power* (El Madkouri 2003: 69). In other words, being powerful gives you the chance to impose your law, to input your own data, while being weak only permits you to receive what the powerful introduces into your domain.

Through his analysis of some aspects of translation of Moroccan literature into Spanish, El Madkouri proves how particular cultures, traditionally subject to translation, are discarded and classified as extremely private. His theory sustains the use of a rhetoric strategy to put in practice this phenomenon, which consists in *redefining* some key-concepts; mainly *culture* and *civilization*.

According to El Madkouri (2003: 70), before Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (1993) these two concepts were considered as antonyms. The first was mainly related to the countryside, agriculture, delay and backwardness, while the second referred to the city with all its mobility and constant renewal; north and south of the Mediterranean, Greco Roman and Semite communities. The publishing of Huntington's article, however, helped, in a great measure, redefining both notions. On the one hand, *civilization* became a wide frame, a sort of macro culture, which involves many small manifestations, circumstances and certain regions. On the other, *culture* turned out to be a euphemism for issues more restricted to *religion*. The association between both terms has much to do with the semiotic obligations and commitments of globalization. In that way, the author claims that the discourse of the media as well as political discourse in Spain is manipulated according to interest. Politicians and ideologists proclaim themselves many times as the torches of *progress* and *reason* that eliminate *fanaticism* and *fundamentalism*. In this way language is used as a means of control and identity consolidation. In El Madkouri's theory, globalization is, after all, none but a *deliberate linguistic construction*. Language, no doubt, is the most powerful weapon of change (op.cit.: 71).

While civilizations and cultures could have a universal meaning, religion is only limited to believers. According to El Madkouri (op.cit. 72), this is exactly why globalization clashes with religion. Solving this problem could only be achieved either by converting the issue of religion into a relative one or by eliminating it, "*El proceso globalizador pasa por la asimilación, y no por la integración ecológica. Aquellos aspectos no asimilables son sencillamente eliminados, o cuando son reacios, condenados*" (Globalization can be considered as a process of assimilation,

but not as an ecologic integration. Those aspects that cannot be assimilated are simply eliminated or condemned)² (op.cit. 72).

Agreeing, thus, with Carbonell I Cortes, El Madkouri (op.cit. 73) thinks that this is precisely why Arabic literature translated into Spanish is subject to criteria of compatibility and incompatibility. The aesthetic value is not a standard. Compatibility to the image of the *other* according to the system of established *stereotypes* seems to be more relevant, “*Los casos atípicos son reconducidos para que puedan encajar con los anteriores; es decir, que son manipulados*” (atypical cases are usually redirected in order to match with former cases; in other words, they are manipulated)³ (op.cit. 73).

Language, power, politics, stereotypes, literature and translation can be considered then as terms that could never be separated. Only those who possess power are allowed to have freedom of motion, commerce, production of technology and images and also the options for choosing which kind of literature to translate. Under those circumstances we have to wonder if the criteria for the translation of Arabic literature apply to those rules and whether they satisfy the traditional stereotyped images about the Orient.

6. Literature about the Orient in Spanish context

As mentioned earlier, awarding the Nobel for Literature to Naguib Mahfouz increased the rate of translation of Arabic literature in general, and Egyptian in particular, into Spanish language. But are the novels of Mahfouz the only source of attraction in the world of translation or literature about the East in general? Before proceeding into the analysis of the data extracted from the website of one of Spain’s most important bookshops, *La Casa del Libro*, we have to distinguish between two types of novels typified as foreign literature on that same website. The first type refers, in general, to literature written about the East, while the second is Arabic –mainly Egyptian literature translated into Spanish.

6.1. Oriental literature translated into Spanish

The number of novels translated into Spanish from oriental languages, or written about the East in other languages than Arabic then translated into Spanish, is huge. Thus, the criterion for choosing the novels has been the eastern countries or cities that they represent. The analysis pretends verifying the existence or absence of stereotypes about each country according to the description of the novels on the mentioned website. The novels are listed here chronologically with the most recent comes first:

1. De Córdoba, Ibn Hazm. 2012. *El collar de la paloma* (The Pigeon’s Collar): the constant republishing of Ibn Hazm’s novel about love and lovers reflects the traditional inclination of Spanish Orientalism for the translation of its own cultural legacy, the glorious past of

² My translation.

³ My translation.

- Muslims that contrasts with the actual condition of Islamic countries. The novel highlights the glorious past of Cordoba, famous capital of Almansour, the great metropolis of its period.
2. Nahapetian, N. 2012. *Quién mató a Ayatolá Kanuni* (Who Killed the Ayatollah Kanuni): the novel depicts the modern life in Iran under the reign of the ayatollahs. The description of the novel on the website points out in the first place the cruelty of the religious rulers of the country and reflects the life, manners, contradictions and double moral of the recent Iran. Religious firmness, frequently related to cruelty, is a famous stereotype about the East.
 3. Al Hachimi, N. 2010. *El último patriarca* (The Last Patriarch): this is the typical story of a Moroccan girl who fights against the cruelty of patriarchal traditions in her native land, Morocco. Her journey to the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar changes her attitude, way of thinking and, consequently, her identity after getting in contact with western manners. The opposition East/West here is very obvious.
 4. Irving, W. 2010. *Cuentos de la Alhambra* (Tales from the Alhambra): the fantastic stories told by the author about the Alhambra de Granada represent, according to the description a new literary genre: Fantastic Literature. Inspired by memories, history and myths about the Alhambra, these stories are considered as an important source of information about Granada. The glorious fantastic past of the Arabic Spain is again highlighted.
 5. Mishima, Y. 2010. *Confesiones de una mascara* (Confessions of a mask): sexual perversion is pointed out as the main theme of this novel. Homosexuality is also contrasted with the manners and traditions of the Japanese society considered as conventional.
 6. Mishima, Y. 2010. *El color prohibido* (The Forbidden Color): homosexuality is highlighted as a new wave of protests that invades Japanese traditional society. In addition, another violent tone appears in the website's description. The Orient is perverse and bloody.
 7. Naipaul, V.S. 2010. *India*: the description highlights the sarcasm in Naipaul's novel that depicts all the contradictions in his original country. Topics like the role of women, social categorization of people and old rituals are compared to the industry of movies and new literature. The description considers that the novel is a true testimony presented by the author about Indian society. The novel is originally written in English. It is perceived as part of the literature that represents a faithful image of the Orient.
 8. Sasson, J.P. 2009. *La sultana* (The Sultana): as a feminist novel, the western author condemns the supposed cruelty and injustice against women in Saudi Arabia. The description of the novel on the website highlights the issue that it is considered as a real testimony of a very brave woman who defies the cruel conditions against women in the Arab world. The description, thus, is generalized over the whole Arab world. It also points out the veil as a sign of oppression.
 9. Khadra, Y. 2008. *Las sirenas de Bagdad* (The Sirens of Baghdad): the novel depicts the memories of a young Iraqi student who was forced to leave his studies in Baghdad and go back to his village, also invaded by war. The war in Beirut brings back to life those memories. Death, corruption, humiliation, destruction and insecurity are the most common aspects of the occupied Iraq, where he finds himself driven to *terrorism*. However, the description of this novel on the website gives the impression that it is the fault of the *fundamentalists*, the *terrorists*, the so called *civil war* but not the occupation.
 10. Sasson, J.P. 2007. *Las hijas de la sultana* (The Daughters of the Sultana): as a second part of the former novel, this story depicts a *dramatic crossroads* that the daughters of the Sultana suffer from in Saudi Arabia. Educated in an *intolerant society*, one of them becomes lesbian and the other an Islamic fundamentalist. *Brutality and repression* are highlighted also as

a common behavior against women in the Arab world, not only Saudi Arabia. Sexual subversion is defended and fundamentalism is attacked.

11. Sundarisan, I. 2007. *Emperatriz tras el velo* (The Empress behind the Veil): the novel is about India. The description of the website reflects a typical image of the harem of the sultan with all its luxury and court plots. Married to a soldier, the young heroine Mehrunnisa succeeds to get familiar with the emperor's court and when she gets older she marries the emperor himself. The description assures too that the novel is a faithful description of the period that it depicts.
12. Maalouf, A. 2004. *Samarqanda* (Samarqand): originally written in French, this novel resurrects the medieval Persia which, according to the description on the website, is full of contradictions. Three figures are highlighted: the famous poet Ommar Khayyam, the powerful minister Nizam el Molk and the mysterious ismaeli Hassan Sabbah described as assassinate who terrorized the whole country. Once more, the figure of the terrorist appears. However, we have to point out that Persian nation all through history has always been described as powerful, before and after being a part of the Islamic – non Arabic speaking world.
13. Hoffer, W. and Mahmoudy, B. 2003. *No sin mi hija* (Not without my daughter): the novel is originally written in English. It represents a clear opposition between two nations: the United States and Iran. After being married to a Persian physician for more than four years, the American heroine goes on vacation to Teheran with her husband and her daughter. The husband decides to stay there and gives her the choice to stay or to go back alone without her daughter. The heroine, of course, plans for escaping with her daughter through the mountains of Iran and Turkey. The pretext presented for her escape is the strange nature of Persian traditions.
14. Waltari, M. 2003. *Sinuhé el egipcio* (The Egyptian Sinuhe): this novel represents Egypt. It was converted into a movie a long time ago. The republishing of the novel reflects the insistence to perpetuate the old way of life in Egypt and its old civilization, an image totally in contrast with the modern Egypt. Thus, we can observe here an old stereotype about the glorious past revived again. The fascinating far world of the Egypt of the Pharaohs is highlighted.

As noticed in the above analysis, the majority of the old stereotypes are still present in the literature being published about the Orient. In addition, new stereotypes about terrorism, religious cruelty and the oppression of women's freedom appear. However, they are not related to the Far East but mainly to Iran, Iraq, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. Breaking the *social taboo* created by manners and traditions is a common factor between all these novels. This can be noticed, above all, in novels about the Far East, especially Japan, where the figure of the homosexual is relevant; it does break the social taboo, but yet maintains euphemisms created to conceal it.

Another relevant aspect for our analysis is also the issue that the major part of these novels is not originally written in Arabic, although some of them are about Arab countries. The East, then, is not as uniform as the stereotypes try to depict it either concerning language or concerning traditions. However, it is frequently opposed and compared to the West in general.

6.2. Egyptian literature translated into Spanish

In this part we study in particular Egyptian narrative translated into Spanish. The most important novels that have been frequently and repeatedly published are listed below in a chronological order with the latest comes first:

1. Mahfouz, N. 2011. *El Cairo Nuevo* (The Modern Cairo): the description on the website points out also the contradiction between the past and the hopes for modernization, condemning in particular the period of the monarchy in Egypt. Nevertheless, it determines precisely the period that the novel represents, which is the 1930s.
2. Mahfouz, N. 2011. *La batalla de Tebas* (The Struggle of Thebes): detailed description of the glorious past of Egypt and its fight against the Hyksos invaders reflects the traditional interest in the period of the Pharaohs.
3. Mahfouz, N. 2010. *Entre dos palacios* (Palace Walk): the description of the novel points out women's oppression by their husbands that is supposed to be according to the Islamic Law, while those husbands live happily enjoying their time with dancers and singers. Moral hypocrisy of the father, Ahmad Abdel Gawad, is the most relevant issue discussed in the description, and not historical events that the novel also reflects.
4. Mahfouz, N. 2010. *Palacio del deseo* (The Palace of Desire): this part of the Mahfouz's famous trilogy discusses the beginning of the change in the father's attitude accompanied by the change occurring in the society during that period. Nevertheless, the confrontation between what the description calls the traditional Islamism and the corrosive influence of the West is pointed out. Once again the contradiction of religion in an Arab country with the western life is highlighted.
5. Al Aswany, A. 2009. *Chicago*: Egyptians in the exile representing the contradictory Egyptian society is the subject of this novel taking place in a university campus in Chicago. The main characters are a medicine student who is a brilliant detractor of the Egyptian regime, a devoted Muslim student, a corrupt president of the Egyptian Students Association who collaborates with the secret services of his country, and a university professor who denies his origins. The description of the novel on the website does not only point out the conflict between these diverse characters, but also highlights an ideological opposition between East and West.
6. Al Khamissi, K. 2009. *Taxi*: the main theme in this novel is social criticism through the comments and the dialogues of taxi drivers and passengers. This novel is usually perceived as one of the principal literary works that foretold the Egyptian revolution. Nevertheless, the website's description applies the critic of the Egyptian society for all Arab countries and does not highlight the Egyptian revolution.
7. Ashour, R. 2008. *Granada*: the history of Muslims in Granada is the main subject of this novel. The description highlights the loss of the Andalus, the vanishing of Islamic culture and the consequent transformation of the society. The choice of the translation of this novel, thus, represents one of the most favorite subjects for Spanish Orientalism and also translation from Arabic into Spanish.
8. Al Aswany, A. 2007. *El edificio Yacobián* (The Yacopian Building): a building is used as a metaphor for the contemporary Egypt with all its variation of ideological, social, and

economic orientations. The author, as mentioned in the website description, dissects the actual Egyptian society. Aristocratic decadents, businessmen, corrupt politicians, the poor who live on the roof of the building, a homosexual journalist, etc. The building is an authentic microcosm that authorizes the criticism of all types of contrast, like political corruption of the institutions, discrimination of women or the suffering of youth to achieve a good economic level. This high level of criticism has been the main reason of the interest expressed for the translation of this novel into various languages like English and Spanish. Revealing the secrets of the Egyptian society, the taboos that somehow reflect some stereotypes about the Orient, could be considered as one of the reasons of such interest.

9. Mahfouz, N. 2006. *El callejón de los milagros* (Midaq Alley): this description offers three classic stereotypes: the young girl who sacrifices everything for money, the man who has sexual inclinations to boys, and the widow who looks for a lover. Poverty and misery are two typical characters of the centre of old Cairo; sexual perversions and decadence are present. This novel was translated into Spanish even before the awarding of Nobel to Mahfouz. The constant republishing of the translation could be an indicator for the desire of keeping in the mind of the Spanish reader the old image of the Egypt under British occupation.
10. Mahfouz, N. 2006. *La azucarera* (The Sugar Street): in this part of the trilogy, the grandsons of the merchant Ahmad Abdel Gawad are more independent characters than his sons. The 1930s and the 1940s witness the ideological change and variation in political views. Communism and Islamic fundamentalism are pointed out as two extremes of these views; two opposite terms that guarantee a contradictory future for the country according to the description of the novel on the website. The link between fundamentalism and decadence on one side, and communism, freedom and development on the other is highlighted.
11. Al Hakim, T. 2003. *Diario de un fiscal rural* (Diaries of a Public Prosecutor in the Countryside): translated into Spanish and published for the first time in Spain during the 1950s, this novel represents one of the most important novels that criticize Egyptian society during the 1920s. The choice of translating this novel into Spanish was made, as mentioned before, past the second half of the 20th century. The recent date of edition on the website reflects a desire of maintaining the image of the rural life in the Egyptian countryside in the mind of the Spanish reader, an image which has, no doubt, changed so much during the last six or seven decades. However, the description on the website does not describe only the novel, but it also introduces some information about the writer's biography and how the issue of studying Law in the West changed his way of thinking in order to be more critical and precise. This translation could be considered, then, as one of the examples that Kabbani mentions in her study about translations and their role in the production and the formation of the image of the other (1994: 129).
12. Idris, Y. 2003. *Una cuestión de honor* (A Matter of Honor): the description of this translation shows the same interest as in the previous one in depicting the Egyptian rural life over almost 90 years ago. Again, the date of the edition shows that the novel is still being published, presenting, in this way, a false old image of Egypt.
13. Mahfouz, N. 2002. *Miramar*: the fight for a countryside girl who travels to Alexandria to work in a guest house summarizes the events of the novel. Nevertheless, the description does not reflect the historical reference of the novel that depicts the Egyptian society past the 1952 revolution through the four men characters who try to win the girl's heart.
14. Mahfouz, N. 2001. *El viaje del hijo de Fatuma* (The Journey of Ibn Fatuma): this novel is usually perceived as a sort of travel literature. Reaching the required symbolic interpretation

of this novel is only possible to readers who love Naguib Mahfouz and have necessarily read necessarily *Hijos de nuestro barrio* (2000) (Children of Gebelawi), where we get to know that *Gabal* and *Gabalawy* are references to Paradise and the Creator respectively. The symbolic nature of the novel represents the different phases in a man's life in his way to achieve the complete knowledge. The description on the website, however, does not reach that point of knowledge. It only offers the idea of a young man who wants to learn to overcome the decadence of his native country. It only speaks about the adventures of this young man through various countries with different manners and traditions. The description on the website, thus, only highlights cultural differences and decadence.

From the above analysis we notice that old works, formerly published during the 1980s and the 1990s, are still being issued, and represent a major part of Egyptian novels translated into Spanish; all editions above mentioned took place after 2000. This could be an indicator for the desire of maintaining those typical images about Egypt in the past century. Yet, the translation of contemporary writings points out the will for recording new images and hence new linguistic expressions introduced into literature as an echo to those produced due to political and ideological conflicts, even inside Egypt, at least during the last two decades. Women's oppression, next to religious fanaticism, seems to be the main theme that feeds back the choice of works to be translated.

Another dimension that appears and has to be seriously considered is the figure of the homosexual character, especially in Al Aswany's novel, *Yacobian*. This figure is common among the stereotypes of the Orient, as mentioned in the works of Kabbani (1994) and *De Bunes I Barra* (1989). Yet, it is regarded as a socio-cultural taboo in Arab societies. The euphemisms created concerning this aspect are numerous.

Al Aswany's novels, in particular, have gained an international fame precisely for breaking the social taboos. The works of Mahfouz also criticize the society and they contain social taboos, but they are expressed usually through euphemisms. The case of *Yacobian*, precisely, is different; it exposes everything. The case of *Chicago* is similar, although it focuses on the psychological side of the characters.

In addition to Al Aswany, Ashour and Al Khamissi, Youssef Ziedan's *Azazil* –which condemns religious violence is going to be translated soon into Spanish by *Turners Libros* editorial (Youssef Ziedan's Facebook Page)⁴. Sharp social and religious criticism, thus, seems to be a must for Egyptian works to be translated into Spanish.

7. Conclusion

As observed from the analysis of the type, origin, description and the comments about the novels perceived all as foreign narrative, although the first group studied above were not all originally written in Arabic, we can notice the existence of both old and new social stereotypes. The concept of compatibility, thus, as mentioned before, applies to certain criteria. The novels to be

⁴ As announced by the author on his Facebook page.

translated should satisfy certain stereotypes and express predetermined images perceived in the translation language culture as representative of the original language society.

The relation between literature, translation and power, thus is not arbitrary. There are certain laws to be fulfilled, predetermined rules that have to be followed, and determined images that have to be maintained. In this way, we should deduce that the Spanish culture, as a recipient, imposes its law over the Egyptian literature. It has the right to select and reject; it represents the strong side of the equation. The question now should be whether the Egyptian culture is as much selective as the Spanish regarding translation of Spanish literature into Arabic. Another issue that has to be studied is whether western translations of Arabic literature have to stop being selective. If translation was really meant to be a tool for understanding the *other* and a bridge that connects cultures, why does it have to be selective, especially when the selection is always unfair to the community as a whole?

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