

THE NOTION OF TRANSLATION IN THE ARAB WORLD: A CRITICAL DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

After synthesizing the notion of translation as reflected during the two major historical translation movements (medieval and (post)colonial), this chapter is conceived as a critical reflection on the contemporary intellectual and cultural developments of the Arab world as it unfolds within the dynamics of its historicity. While taking stock of the 9th–11th centuries' glories when a wealth of the Greek was translated into Arabic and later transmitted to Europe through Latin, this chapter aims to tackle the contemporary effects of the (post)colonial period on today's shaping of the notion of translation and its future perspectives as a probable key civilizational development factor in the positioning of the Arab culture in a globalized world dominated by English. The objective of this chapter is then to outline a more encompassing understanding of translation in the perspective of the relation to the Other, and the reasons behind the critical character of translation for the development and long-awaited renaissance of the Arab world.

Keywords

Arab world; translation movements; the Arab Self and the Other; knowledge diffusion; Islam; House of Wisdom; Egypt; postcolonialism; self-alienation; indigenization of knowledge.

Preamble

I would like to start by clarifying my understanding of the way the notion of translation in the Arab world would be brought about.

In the words of the editors, the “*Atlas* project adopts a bottom-up research strategy. It moves away from a broad survey of existing concepts which may lead to an *a posteriori* notion of translation . . . Our bottom-up approach relies on reports about the *perceived* nature, place and function of translation in the traditions the *Atlas* will manage to cover.” (Gambier & Stecconi) While it could be understood that the only way to reach this notion is to follow an inductive methodology and conduct a gigantic full-scale,

synchronic survey of 422 million people spread over 22 countries as well as a diachronic account of over twelve centuries of Arab translation history, my interpretation however is that the pursued notion of translation can also be perceived from the actual experience of living among the translation-related communities of the Arab world and taking stock of the interactions with the enriching and varied environments of academia and professional services¹.

Similar to what Mecca used to be for the Arabs of the peninsula before the advent of Islam, i.e. the stronghold of paganism in Arabia with its annual pilgrimage to Kaaba's idols, its famous goods and poetry fair of Okaz, and the mandatory passage of the trade caravans in their "winter and summer journeys" (Quran, 106), the Gulf countries seem to play nowadays a leading role in the region to attract skills from around the world, whether for short or long term periods. Every year, countries such as the UAE and Qatar, organize hundreds of international events, including conferences, exhibitions, festivals, sports competitions, etc., and receive tens of thousands of expatriate workers (although with a high turnover) from all over the world. With such a vibrant activity, the chances for someone to concretely sense and observe diversity, and what it entails in terms of mixing, communication and translation are quite high to say the least. Hence, the firm belief that the participant-observation approach that was chosen to write this report is actually meeting the bottom-up requirement set for the composition of the *Atlas*.

However, this does not mean that the following reduces the Arab world to a personal and metonymic narrative of some countries. As a matter of fact, the said interactions were primarily grounded in readings that were not otherwise accessible and were complemented by a great amount of local and Arab-wide encounters that have sparked in many ways reflections on the state, status and understanding of translation in the Arab world. The only limitation that I must admit is the deceiving number of responses that I have received from a sample of translators, teachers and students of the field to a widely diffused survey questionnaire. Hence, my reliance on three combined sources: collected data, personal encounters and published works.

1. Introduction

The task of mapping a perceived notion of any object of study on the scale of a space that spreads over 10% of the globe and over 10 centuries, is challenging to say the least. In the information age, the difficulty may be somewhat eased but not completely dismissed. As a matter of fact, most of the burden lies not only in the quantitative aspect of mapping, but also in its qualitative dimension. The challenge is more about the responsibility of reporting a historically deeply rooted translation culture rather than gathering information from various sources and people spread around the Arab space. Then the question is whether today's Arabs are still the legitimate and conscious heirs of their forefathers, the medieval mediators between Greeks, Indians and Europeans. Where are the Arabs actually standing regarding this heritage? Moreover, what are the effects and implications of such awareness for the education of contemporary generations and the building of the collective Arab imagination about its own past?

¹ This report was written in part during a leave spent at the Translation and Interpreting Institute (TII) in Qatar.

Schematically speaking, the translation movements in the Arab world can be roughly situated at two major historical periods: the first, partially during the Umayyad dynasty where translations started from Greek to Arabic through Syriac and Aramaic languages (8th century CE) and then directly into Arabic, which became the official language of administration for the fast-extending caliphate. This first period of translation reached its zenith during the Abbasid dynasty with Al-Mansur and following caliphs (9th-11th centuries), including the Baghdad's famous House of Wisdom under caliph Al-Ma'mun, and in Umayyad Spain. The second period of translation took place along the 19th century CE, mostly under the Ottoman Egypt of Mohammed Ali and his heirs, where the postcolonial setting produced yet another type of translation movement. With this in mind, suffice to say that for now this legacy is not negligible and will definitely play a major role in the shaping of any representation of today's understanding and state of translation, as well as any projection for the role of translation in the future of the Arab world. Hence the responsibility of our present task is further increased if translation is to be considered one of the key factors to the development of a knowledge-centered culture in the Arab world—indeed its reinstatement after centuries of intellectual stagnation.

This report is then conceived as a critical reflection on the contemporary intellectual and cultural development of the Arab world as it unfolds within the dynamics of its historicity. While taking stock of the 9th-11th centuries' glories where a wealth of the Greek heritage was translated into Arabic and later transmitted to Europe through Latin, this chapter aims to tackle the contemporary effects of the (post)colonial period on today's shaping of the notion of translation and its future perspectives as probably a key civilizational development factor in the positioning of the Arab culture in a globalized world dominated by the English language. The objective of this report is then to outline a more encompassing understanding of translation in the perspective of the relation to the Other, and the reasons behind the critical character of translation for the development and long-awaited renaissance of the Arab world.

In order to achieve these general objectives, the report will be divided in three major sections. The first will sketch out some significant historical phases for the understanding of the concept of translation through two major periods of Arab history, namely what I would broadly name "the rise of the Self" and the (post)colonial "surrender of the Self". While acknowledging the contribution of Arab culture to humanity through translation, it is necessary to nuance the portrait of a past that is usually seen as ahistorical and artificially surviving in the collective imagination as a shining period that has continuously been shedding its lights until today. That is why it will be paramount to contrast that first period with the following section (the (post)colonial) which brings to the fore a very different picture, not only of translation, but of Arab self-perception through the new notion of translation that had developed during that first period until the present time and its global challenges. The third and final section titled "Desalienating the Self" will then divide into three subsections where the actual (discursive) status of the notion of translation will be tackled through a few accounts of the Egyptian revolution, the development requirements of the region as projected in several studies mainly conducted by the UNDP, and finally through the works of a contemporary Moroccan philosopher, Taha Abderrahmane.

2. A Heavy Historical Heritage

Translation in the history of the Arab world plays like a hallmark, a distinctive feature that illuminates its primary role among the greatest civilizations until today. But the position of translation needs to be related to other constituents of what makes a civilization. As a matter of fact, while the spiritual and cultural references of the Quran and poetry were a centrifugal force expressing its specificity, translation has given the Arab world a counterbalance through the centripetal force that attracted a variety of forms of knowledge and hence stood up for its transitivity and exchangeability. These two forces established a sort of equilibrium in the relationship between the Self and the Other, which indicates the significance of translation as one of the pillars of the Arab legacy.

To measure the breadth of this foundational role of translation in the development of the Arab civilization, it may be worth to present some of the main moments that have shaped the notion during that classical period. The following thrust into history however is not meant to give an exhaustive account of the translation movements into and from Arabic (Heyworth-Dunne, 1940; Salama-Carr, 1990; Gütas, 1998; Montgomery, 2000) but to draw some general traits of the concept that is proper to the times and spaces of its advent. Bearing in mind moreover that the interpretation of this concept is ultimately the product of the author's own position, historical context and of the discourses on translation available to him, as they cannot reflect all its diversity and complexity.

Despite the reduction that is inherent to any attempt at submitting events and phenomena to historical periodization, the “rise, progress and fall” progression is the most common. In the following sections, I would like to present the notion of translation from the vantage point of the ‘Arab Self’ as a living being with the attached feelings of dignity, growth, self-fulfillment, or lack thereof.

2.1 *The Rise of the Arab Self*

In the 3rd and 5th centuries CE, translation was mainly the preoccupation of Mediterranean Christendom with a focus on Biblical translation. As the Christians of the East became increasingly independent from the Byzantine orthodoxy, after Eastern Roman emperors Zeno and Justinian pushed them to the outskirts of the Empire and beyond into Sassanian territories in the 4th and 5th centuries, translation into Syriac developed during the 5th and 6th centuries into a vibrant source of Hellenistic knowledge in its own right at first and later on through the Arabic language (Montgomery, 2000; Healey, 2006).

From the 5th century onwards, translations from Greek – and to a lesser extent from Pahlavi and Sanskrit – are increasingly devoted to secular works (Montgomery, 2000: 64). While Biblical and ecclesial translation was taking the largest share of the activity, the growing translation of secular knowledge gave this notion a whole new dimension. In that intermediary stage before the advent of Arabic, translating into Syriac did not only suppose the perpetuation and preservation of the sacred scriptures and their theological doctrines, but it mainly became the instrument of duplication, diffusion and appropriation of a new kind of wisdom – the so-called ‘secular’ wisdom. Hence, the

institutional translation movement initiated by the Syrians was progressively geared toward rational and practical knowledge. Compared to translation in ancient Rome, focused on cultural self-development, both concepts of translation can be deemed as appropriation since they help achieve a form of integration of the Other. However, the former appropriates up to its symbols and myths, while the latter only adopts the instrumental and shareable features without compromising the core of its beliefs or the forms of its literary legacy.

From the 7th century onwards, above all “[t]ranslation into Syriac meant the movement of an institutional knowledge, increasingly restricted to a textual existence, into a language of daily speech and use.” (Montgomery, 2000: 67) This is indicative of the fact that the concept of translation as transmission is starting to differentiate between what becomes constitutive of one’s identity and culture, and what is limited to one’s abilities to act in the world. Although one has to nuance this state of affairs for the Syriac language as it has integrated a great deal of Greek forms, Arabic translation has been even more selective in its utilitarian approach to foreign knowledge.

The paradox however is that Syriac would end up being the first language the Arabs used as their source of Greek science. The more Syriac language developed and became a mature culture of knowledge—“a true competitor to Greek as a language of knowledge embodiment and transfer” (Montgomery, 2000: 71)—the more translations into Syriac would tend to be faithful by the 8th century. At the dawn of the Arabic translation period though, the way was paved for Arabic. This was due to two main reasons: first, the Hellenistic legacy was already introduced in the realm of a Semitic constituency; second, there was a proven translation tradition that already existed with Syrian translators who were increasingly learnt in Syriac and Arabic. The novelty of the advent of the Arab translation movement was mainly the extension of its scope that brought together one of the greatest variety of knowledge cultures of the Middle Age, “in the east alone, Syrians, Greeks, Persians, Jews, Hindus, Armenians, and Arabs” (Montgomery, 2000: 77). The literature actually notes that it is a mistake to reduce the translating scholars into the category of “Arabs” since they are of many different cultures. It would be preferable to refer to them as the “scholars of Islam”, that is related to the dominant religion in addition to other “religious backgrounds: Christian, Zoroastrian, Manichean” among others (Idem: 87).

To follow up on the utilitarian aspect that developed with previous translations into Syriac, an important feature of the notion of translation to be emphasized in the nascent Islamic tradition is that of power. This has been articulated in at least two ways. On the one hand, power meant that Islam (the civilization) was both integrating a wealth of textual treasures coming from its expanding territory as well as native scholars and administrators who were able to transform knowledge in astronomy and calculation into practical and enabling instruments of governance over the new Empire. On the other hand, the scholarship that was developing could not reinforce the power of the rulers of Islam unless they would also gain control over the know-how of the translation process itself.

Although the Umayyad dynasty (661-750 CE) did not last long enough to provide Islam with a fairly substantial legacy to its translation tradition except for turning tax calculation from Pahlavi and administrative registers from Syriac into Arabic, one could still highlight the fact that some translation efforts were undertaken especially in

astrology, astronomy and medicine (al-Hamad, 2001: 284-290). Whereas the financial and economic uses of integrating them in the official language of government seem to be clear, the general interest for the knowledge of the ancients was the privilege of the aristocracy (like Khaled ibn Yazid, the grandson of the Umayyad founder) taught by Syrian tutors who were commissioned to translate some Hellenistic books for their instruction. But the more specific interest in translating astronomy came first from the need to control time, to measure it and align Islamic religious practices to the order of their pace. As for medicine, the discovery of highly qualified doctors among the Nestorians was perceived very keenly by the courts, as the governing heirs of the dynasty in power were often surrounded by the best physicians. As a consequence, medicine was among the most popular sciences to be learned, translated into Arabic, and sponsored by the Caliph. All this further indicates the instrumental role of translation in the acquisition and aggregation of power.

The Abbasid Golden Age (8th-9th centuries CE) took this stance to a whole institutional level. Although the phenomenon of translation schools in the Near East—such as Edessa, Nisibis, and Jundishapur—had existed well before the advent of Islam among the Nestorians, the school of the House of Wisdom, maybe created under Abbasid caliphs? al-Mansur (754-775 CE) or al-Rashid (786-809 CE), was developed and brought to its peak by al-Ma'mun (813-833 CE) and, to a lesser extent, al-Mutawakkil (847-861 CE). Under this dynasty, the concept of translation acquired more importance as it increasingly served different critical goals and took different shapes. As a matter of fact, by moving the capital from Damascus to Kufa and Baghdad towards the East, the Abbasids displaced the cultural center from an overly Arab-blooded and Arabized environment to “what had been part of the Persian Empire of the Sassanians.” (Al-Khalili, 2010: 40) A Persian factor which not only reinforced the influence of its well educated nobility to support the caliphate, but its interweavement with the Arab culture gave translation even more weight and impact. A first well-known figure, who served at the court of al-Mansur, was the famous translator of Persian origin Ibn al-Muqaffa' (720-760 CE). He brought, among other works from Sanskrit through the Pahlavi, the translation of the Indian *Panchatantra*, or what has become the legendary Arabic fables of *Kalila wa-Dimna*—a sort of political allegory that caused him a horrible demise, allegedly for his preference of reason over faith (al-Hamad, 2001: 294). As for many intellectuals of this period during the Abbasid era, Ibn al-Muqaffa' initiated an increasing attraction towards Aristotelian rationalism and logic, which indicates how translation played a major role in transforming the Arab culture, extend its territory, and enrich its diversity.

While this shift to the East widened the source-language pool to Pahlavi (and Sanskrit by the same token), it also normalized the use of—even the obsession with—astrology for the exercise of power inspired by the Sassanian ideology, in contrast to Arab culture. This interest drew the first generations of Abbasid caliphs to indistinguishably commission the translation of Zoroastrian astrology together with Indian mathematics and astronomy (Al-Hamad, 2001: 41). As a consequence, the notion of translation expanded from being a mere function of strengthening the confidence of the imperial authority through divination and horoscopes, to acquiring an exploratory role in exposing it to the neighbouring rational and scientific world-views through the encounter of its foundational ancient texts, such as the Hindu *Siddhanta*, Ptolemy's

Almagest, and Euclid's *Elements*. In sum, the explosion of the translation movement can be attributed to two main factors: the personal and generous sponsorship of the caliphs and of some influent noble families (Barmakids and Banu Musa) of the commissioned translations, and the timely advent and integration of papermaking invention brought from China—the first paper mill appearing in Baghdad by the end of the 8th century—as well as the “rise in technologies associated with the production of books: the development of dyes, inks, glues, leather and book-bonding techniques.” (Al-Hamad, 2001: 43)

If there is one Abbasid caliph that brought the House of Wisdom to its highest level of productivity and fame, it is al-Ma'mun, the son of al-Rashid and a Persian slave concubine, who was one of the dynasty's most literate rulers. Under his reign the concept of translation gained an additional dimension as scholars who converged to his court not only were commissioned translators, but also actual scientists who were dazzled by the House of Wisdom's effervescence and what was believed to be “the largest repository of books in the world” of its time (Al-Khalili, 2010: 71). Translation then was at the same time the vehicle for transferring and retranslating ancient texts—for the acquisition of which al-Ma'mun sent emissaries to Greece, Persia and India—into Arabic, and the parallel activity of reinterpreting, commenting and extending them in Arabic until they brought up original works by Hunayn Ibn Ishaq, Thabit ibn Qurrah, al-Kindi, al-Jahiz and the famous al-Khawarizmi, who was the inventor of Algebra. If al-Kindi was the first most acknowledged Arab philosopher and commentator for his indigenization of Aristotle by “making it both accessible and acceptable to the Muslim audience” (Idem: 75), Hunayn Ibn Ishaq (810-877 CE) not only corrected, recomposed fragmented translated works, and retranslated major ancient texts, he also started what could be described—for the time—a form of industrialization of scholarship at the heart of which translation was broken down to a number of stages and tasks. Nestorian of origin, trained in the Basra and Kufa schools of Arabic grammar and disciple of Masawayh—the personal physician of several caliphs and wealthy commissioner of the translation of many medical books—Hunayn ibn Ishaq introduced in the Arab-Muslim dominion the Syriac schools' method of translation where collective translations were traditionally undertaken. Interestingly, the notion of ‘translation school’ evolved with him from being a concentration of practitioners who would imitate one another and perpetuate a name in the field to become an actual training and an effective producing institution (al-Hamad, 2001: 363). The thirst for knowledge was such that the known slogan of this school was: “If translation does not bring about a new science, there is not enough incentive to undergo its pains.” (Idem: 377).

At the School of Hunayn—which was part of or attached to the House of Wisdom—the notion of translation was broken down into three separate functions or stages that required the group of translators to specialize in one of them. The first function was that of ‘the interpreter’ who, besides explaining or disambiguating any abstruse content, would authenticate and crosscheck the Greek and Syriac versions of the texts to be translated as well as their authorship. But in terms of the training task, through this initial position his role was to introduce his students to the notions, the author and his works as well as teach them Arabic grammar. The second function was that of ‘the reader’ (a function initiated by the churches of the Orient) who was in charge of reading slowly and correctly the texts to the translators in order to logically connect the “vouloir-

dire” of the author to the different parts of the text. Here Hunayn’s son, Ishaq, would be his surrogate by giving his translators the choice to freely interpret the text or translate on the basis of the logic of the thought and its textual construction. The third and final function is that of ‘the editor’ (incidentally known as Hubaysh, Hunayn’s nephew), who would use Arabic dictionaries to edit the text, check the spelling and track transcription errors. (al-Hamad, 2001: 373-383) The systematic character of Hunayn’s method was such that he would revise each final product with his translators and, if needed, correct it even after being completed (Idem: 389). In sum, in addition to being one of the most lucrative activities of the time, translation according to Hunayn gained a great deal of symbolic and social capital, as well as organization and method, which would amount to a kind of rationalization. The value of translation is not simply in the multiple stages of its craft or the effort that was invested in its production, but also in the apparent awareness that Hunayn and his team seemed to have in ultimately determining the future of human knowledge. Evidence of this assurance was Hunayn’s status as a translator, which was proportionate to the level of envious criticism that he encountered by some of his competitors at the court of the caliphs both for his recognition as full-fledged scholar and physician, as well as for the protection, sponsorship and wealth accorded to him by translation patrons. Here translation gains yet another dimension which is to distinguish itself from the utilitarian, mechanistic and purely linguistic concept in favour of a more substantive and knowledge-based one. With Hunayn, translation evolves dramatically into a specific and highly rewarded competence—in parallel with original authorship—a science of its own with its schools and disciples (Idem: 368).

If Hunayn was the most famous translator under al-Ma’moun and al-Mutawakkil, Thabit ibn Qurrah (827-902 CE) was his late partner and successor under the latter and al-Mu’tadid (892-902 CE). According to several sources, he is described as an accomplished polyglot and scholar who authored over 150 books in philosophy and medicine (al-Hamad, 2001; al-Khalili, 2010; Kennedy, 2004; etc.). But his greatest contribution was his even more refined conception of translation that led him to push further some aspects of the process, in at least three ways. First, in order to avoid apocrypha that were being circulated by some copyists to attract the money of wealthy patrons, he would analyze the internal structure of the source text and the extent of its correspondence to the already known thought of the alleged author to be translated. Second, he would also compile some content-based guidelines to help his translators achieve their work to the extent that they would be able to correct discrepancies and inconsistencies that may occur in the source text. Finally, while Hunayn and al-Kindi were already well-known for Arabizing technical terms, Thabit seemed to have introduced more systematically crafted neologisms from Arabic roots by following the scholars of Basra who were recognized masters in Arabic etymology (al-Hamad, 2001: 419-422). All in all, the school of Thabit ibn Qurrah promoted the notion of translation to a level of indigenization of knowledge that had never been reached before. It is this very aspect that makes until today for the legendary climax of Arabic science where it was developed using all the resources of its language.

Although not a translator himself, it would be impossible to go over this era, albeit briefly, without introducing the thought of al-Jahiz (776-869 CE), one of the most famous Arabic authors of his time, who developed a *discourse about translation*. al-Jahiz (literally ‘the goggled-eyed’) is still considered a reference in the Arab world when it

comes to theorizing translation. His positions about translation can be summed up in three main ideas. First, he considered that there is no perfect translation since translation is deficient by definition. Despite the incommensurability he emphasizes between original author and translators, he thought that knowing the substance is the minimum condition to undertake a translation. Second, the reason for this imperfection of translation is that he presupposed that perfect bilinguals could simply not exist because the coexistence of languages would hurt both of them. (al-Jahiz, 1996: 76) And third, al-Jahiz believes that if translation of philosophy is imperfect, it is still possible because it can be done “to the benefit of all people while poetry benefits only Arabs” or its own people. (Kilito, 2008: 35) Here, a concept of translation emerges from his very definition: an expression, more appropriately an explicitation of a hidden or obscure meaning, which is so specific and precise that its best linguistic and rhetorical occurrence would only manifest itself in the original language. While such a distrust of translation seems incompatible with the spirit of the era, it should be noted however that this very lack of confidence might have been the motive behind the increasing requirements that have been noted among the best translators of their time.

As a last note on this prosperous two-century period, it should be reminded that a corresponding Umayyad episode had its own heyday in the surviving exile of Andalusian Spain. While the House of Wisdom was the center of attraction of Greek, Persian and Indian manuscripts to be translated and retranslated as well as the climax of Arabic science under al-Ma'mun, the great-grandson of the first Spanish heir of the Umayyads, Abd al-Rahman II (792-852 CE), who established his capital in Cordoba, invested his generous patronage in the collection of Arabic versions of Greek texts and the promotion of scholarship in a spirit of competition with Baghdad. But it is only under Abd al-Rahman III (889-961 CE) and his son al-Hakam (915-976 CE) that the Golden Age of Andalusia rose, the former being comparable to al-Rashid in the unification of his territory and the latter to al-Ma'mun in his taste for scholarship and books. So much so that al-Hakam built the greatest library of Andalusia where copyists, scientists, philosophers, artists and poets converged, an obvious reminder of Baghdad's House of Wisdom. However, “the difference between Cordoba and Baghdad was that there was little in the way of a translation movement here, for most of books that al-Hakam acquired were in Arabic already.” (al-Khalili, 2010: 192) Nevertheless, despite the uncatchable advance of the Abbasids over the Umayyad's in collecting manuscripts and their translations, as well as in scholarship and cultural production in general, it is remarkable that the translational momentum that Baghdad created was such that it did actually extend as far as Andalusia and brought about scientific figures as prominent as Ibn Firnas/Afernas (810-887 CE), Ibn Hazm (994-1064 CE), Ibn al-Haytham/Alhazen (965-1040 CE), al-Zaraqali/Arzachel (1029-1087 CE), Ibn Bajja/Avempace (1095-1138 CE) and the even more famous Ibn Roshd/Averroes (1126-1198 CE).

From the first attempts at transferring knowledge into Arabic through Syriac, Sanskrit and Phalavi between the 8th and 10th centuries—where the translation and retranslation of the works collected at the confines of the Muslim Empire took place—up to the middle of the 12th century beyond Umayyad Andalusia, the notion of translation evolved as a critical link for the development of an original Arabic science. Strong of its intellectual vitality, its impulse to achieving civilizational excellence and its political will to invest substantive resources toward that end, it can be said that the Arab Self of that

period translated the Other with a level of self-confidence that gave it all the freedom to gather the works that it needed and wanted as well as to transpose them in forms that would enable Arab scholars to develop in a fashion that cannot compare to any later time in history. But the next few centuries will unfold as a long journey of intellectual lethargy and fossilization.

2.2 *The Surrender of the Arab Self*

After the sack of Baghdad in 1258 by the Moghuls (even if the Abbasids would reign until the mid-13th century) and the fall of the last bastion of Arab Andalusia in 1492, the Muslim world split into several regional powers and many new dynasties appeared and shifted away from its Arabic-speaking center towards the increasingly powerful and extending Ottoman Empire (1299-1922). In the wake of the French invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798, Mehmet Ali Pasha was sent to re-occupy Egypt in 1801 and clashed with the weakened Mameluks until ousted in 1811.

It is under this new proto-nationalistic leadership of Mehmet Ali—slowly moving away from the Ottoman dependence—that Egypt went on toward modernization. Complementing the bureaucratization of the state, the reform and reorganization of its educational system, and the creation of a textile and military industry, one of the most important aspects of the reconstruction of the country was the import of European knowledge, mainly from France. As Mehmet Ali was able to bring Egypt and Sudan under his rule, as well as rally main figures of the local Egyptian leadership, the Sheikh of al-Azhar University and the general public, he made modernization and the acquisition of the means to attain it his hobbyhorse. As a result, he launched a vast movement to reform education, namely by sending out missions of Egyptian scholars to study Western languages, science and educational methods (Newman, 2011).

One of the prominent figures of this mission was the favorite student of Sheikh al-Azhar al-Attar (1766-1835), imam Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801-1873) who wrote the famous travelogue *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz* (1834), which is an account of his 5-year journey in France where he learned French, studied a number of fields of knowledge, translated 12 books, and encountered several French scholars among whom the Orientalist Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838). After his return from France, in the wider effort to modernize Egypt's educational infrastructure, he was mandated to create the *School of Languages*—on the model of the “Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales” (INALCO) in Paris—which was commonly known as the *School of Translators* (founded in 1835) as a result of his own proposal. At the time, al-Tahtawi became the only native Egyptian administrator of a high-profile institution within the modernized educational system of Egypt, and all his students were native Egyptians too (Newman, 2011). Not only did the School provide language and translation training in French, English, Italian, Turkish and Arabic, it also taught a broad range of subjects such as geography, mathematics, history and Islamic law. Al-Tahtawi's enthusiasm in realizing his dream project was such that in addition to heading the School and crafting its own teaching manuals, he added a translation section that ultimately enabled his students to translate and publish over two thousand books into Arabic and Turkish under his personal supervision. As the topics of these translations were increasingly diversified—not only scientific or military—Egypt witnessed a real translation movement

including a wide range of areas in the arts and humanities (al-Shayyal, 1951). Moreover, it was not enough that al-Tahtawi was in charge of a thriving institution, Muhammad Ali added the European library of Cairo and the official Gazette to his duties, the latter after his mentor al-Attar. But this effervescence would not survive al-Tahtawi, whose heirs did not appreciate the French and modernistic influences he had imprinted on all of his undertakings. As a consequence, he was exiled to Sudan under Abbas I—where he famously translated Fénélon’s *Télémaque*—until the advent of Said I, the last of Muhammad Ali’s sons under whose reign he continued to translate French works—notably the *Code Napoléon*—and wrote books on education (Newman, 2011).

In any case, if al-Tahtawi would later be considered as the ‘Father of Arab nationalism’, a postcolonial approach to his translational posture—as displayed in his *Takhlis al-Ibriz*—would give a much mitigated and nuanced account of his contribution at the top of what is commonly described as ‘the second Arab translation movement.’ In a sharp analysis of al-Tahtawi’s work, Shaden Tageldin (2011) has shown how—through a mirroring effect brought by the accounts of the architect of the first Egyptian mission to France (Jomard, 1777-1862)—al-Tahtawi’s conception of translation is a complex rapprochement of the Arabic language and culture to the French’s he was getting acquainted with through the Hellenistic knowledge that medieval Arabs had themselves transmitted earlier. More specifically, Tageldin contends that al-Tahtawi’s understanding of translation is an attempt at finding a sort of equivalence between French and Arabic that would hopefully raise the latter to the a level of equality while ultimately bringing it to “an irreciprocal economy of colonial translation” (Tageldin, 2011:113). In fact, Tageldin demonstrates how the translations performed by native Egyptians trained at the *École Égyptienne de Paris* and later graduated from al-Tahtawi’s *School of Translators* are

the “currency” that a tacitly French civilization “minted” [...] in an economy of unequal exchange, whereby “civilization”—French defined—determined meaning for Egypt and puts that meaning into circulation among an ever-widening circle of Egyptians (Idem: 113).

This means that translation becomes the very means by which the aborted civilizing mission of Napoleon in Egypt is allowed to perpetuate, with an even more profound and longstanding impact. After his training in France, al-Tahtawi would act as the channel through which not only French science and culture would be available to Egyptians in Arabic, he would also be the living incarnation of the linguistic and culturally hybrid modern Muslim Arab who would influence generations of followers in Egypt and beyond.

Tageldin showed al-Tahtawi’s beliefs in the possibility of translation and the unproblematic commensurability of languages using Casanova’s (2004) argument that at the root of literary domination there is a literary belief among authors about the worldwide equality of languages, literatures and cultures.

In Tageldin’s view (cf. Tageldin, 2011: 120), Egypt consecrates France because France seems to consecrate Egypt by its ability to speak—e.g., through Silvestre de Sacy—its Arabic, Islamic and Egyptian idioms. This shows that the concept of translation in this case is informed by the necessity for its subaltern practitioner to satisfy the latter’s ego first and foremost even if this would ultimately entail the surrender of one’s autonomy to the dominant.

More than a representation of translation as a simple currency exchange or an “alchemical transubstantiation” (Tageldin, 2011: 136) then, the postcolonial perspective emphasizes the ruggedness of the consecration process as “violent”. Here, the notion of translation betrays its inability to keep the parties engaged in the transaction as equals and demonstrates its inherent oppressive nature by pointing out not only its appropriating powers but also its self-alienating ones. Al-Tahtawi’s work embodies the psyche of the subaltern target which is ceding its self-assertiveness to the dominant source through a self-inflicted Gramscian-type of hegemony.

Although the close analysis of a single work would hardly account for all instances of the second Arab translation movement, al-Tahtawi’s book and theory of translation is nonetheless representative of the complex game of dependency that is taking place between the translated and the translating cultures of its time. If this example can be weighed against the possible drifts of the German Romantics’ *Bildung* (Berman, 1992), then it could be compared to the instance where translation’s spoils do not get back to enrich the Self, but rather return to bolster the position of the Other. In the light of the last two centuries that have put Egypt and most of the Arab world under different forms of colonial cultural alienation, the second translation movement appears not only diametrically different from the first. Indeed, it altered the very notion of translation from being the main catalyst of cutting-edge knowledge production (during the 8th-10th centuries) to become the primary channel of a western-like modernization and the means of an irrepressible “seduction whereby the dominated translate themselves toward, and finally into, their dominator” (Tageldin, 2011 134).

3. Desalinating the Arab Self

This section will attempt to address the contemporary period (20th up to now since ca. 1900) through the perspective of three different entry points to the concept of translation and the hopes it holds for the future of the Arab world. The first is from the angle of citizen media translation as applied during and after the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ (2011 onwards). The second will analyze the concept of translation through a series of UNDP reports over more than a decade on Arab knowledge and Human Development (2003-2014) that envisioned the possibility of fostering a knowledge-based economy through the promotion of translation among other means. Thirdly, this final section will briefly introduce the work of a contemporary Arab philosopher who has reconceptualized translation in a manner that tries to address the current challenges of the Arab world and its struggle to liberate the Self from its various kinds of alienation and subjugation.

3.1 Translating Revolution

In the wake of the decolonization movements in the mid-20th century, Arab nationalism attained its climax. Various secular regimes appeared and broadcast to their populations an image of resistance and opposition to the previous colonial powers. At the same time, however, they kept their peoples under oppressive regimes and enjoyed recognition and indirect support by Western democracies. As the Cold War was waning and globalization gained momentum along fast developing information technologies (namely satellite

television) and more so with the spread of Internet access, the Arab world became more prone to exchange with the rest of the planet. This fostered hopes of political change—especially among the generation that was born just as the Berlin wall and the USSR were falling. The tipping point occurred at the start of the first decade of the 21st century when worldwide images of the power of mobilization through social media spread everywhere. The Arab world was then ready to revolt against its ruling classes and their collusion with powers that seemed to maintain the *status quo* at more than one level—political, economic, educational, cultural, and cognitive, among many other aspects. Hence, the advent of the so-called ‘Arab Spring’.

In her latest edited book, *Translating Dissent. Voices from and with the Egyptian Revolution* (2016a), Mona Baker collected the essays of a wide variety of activists, movie-makers, artists and academics who, in one way or another, have reflected on the different and complementary roles, places, forms and impacts of translation in the Egyptian uprising of January 2011 and its repercussions and backlashes until the turnaround of June 2013. Baker gives voice to a number of contributors whose common concern was to provide their testimonies as citizens to the ways in which translation has taken different roles and shapes. Whether through interlingual reporting, video subtitling and cartoon adaptation, translation is articulated in so many different ways that one of the contributors argues that “the momentous and deeply traumatic events of the past few years are forcing us to rethink everything, including our use of language and translation, as we look to the future.” (Baker, 2016a: 2)

In light of the above, it becomes a matter of fact that the notion of translation is not anymore exclusive to academic discourse to the extent that it has been co-opted by other disciplines and fields of interests. Following the footsteps of hermeneutic scholars such as Ricoeur (2006) who have extended the meaning of translation to interpretation, Baker indulges into the broad distinction between translation in its traditional textual/verbal “narrow sense” including subtitling and interpretation, and translation in its broader sense which

[I]nvolves the mediation of diffuse symbols, experiences, narratives and linguistic signs of varying lengths across modalities (words into image, lived experience into words), levels and varieties of language (Standard Written Arabic and spoken Egyptian, for example), and cultural spaces, the latter without necessarily crossing a language boundary. (Baker, 2016a: 7)

In this latter sense, the notion of translation would not only gain *breadth* in terms of the diverse subcategories of translation, but it would also gain *ground* as it would encompass the actual experience of conveying the density and intensity of being the witness of a historical moment. This can be evidenced by El-Tamami (2016: 26) when she writes: “The revolution gave my writing soil to root in.” As a matter of fact, writing with a deep sense of filtering and digesting the deeply moving and highly fluid events that are occurring right at the corner of one’s street becomes a translation in its own right, as the articulated narrative is nothing but a reorganization of a set of social political events into an approximately corresponding set of semiotic events. A radically different experience from traditional news casting as it does not hesitate to integrate the heavy subjective layer that comes with any lived experience. Translating the Egyptian revolution then is to

gather the thickness of life and recast it into the realm of a discourse that prioritizes a truth value of presence, no matter how subjective, because this is exactly what grants it authenticity:

This, I believe, is what personal narratives have the potential to do: to counter those dangerously simplistic and alienating reports by bringing people into the fold, into presence. Providing a conduit of access: ‘being here’ rather than ‘knowing what happened’. (El-Tamami, 2016: 29)

In the same vein, and despite the spatial metaphor that has overshadowed many concepts of translation in the West (carrying across), translation—particularly in the context of an uprising—needs to be reframed and redefined according to the spaces it attaches to and stems from. For Selim (2016: 81) translation requires “detailed, quotidian, *participatory* knowledge of the broader social and political contexts in which the text is embedded; the condition of being ‘there’, *sur place* – ‘in place’” (emphasis in the original). This means that the transmission of meaning cannot take place without grounding it into the tragic revolutionary spaces, let alone its temporal instances. In effect, if citizen translation acquires its thickness and legitimacy from its embeddedness into the spatial framework where the translated narrative and its emotional dimensions are rooted, then it is all the more the case for the various temporalities of reporting. Here again Selim suggests that there are two types of militant translations: “crisis translation” and “deep translation.”

‘[C]risis translation’ is done in the urgency of the moment, when a specific event or series of events require immediate dissemination to the outside world, on the order of ‘this is happening now!’. . . Crisis translation mainly focuses on the spectacles of violence and resistance of the kind that quickly became universally legible emblems of a new dissident global order somewhere around 2011. (Selim, 2016: 83)

On the other hand, “deep translation” falls under another logics as it

[D]eliberately moves beyond image and spectacle, with the intention of building international solidarity networks that are nonetheless firmly rooted in the granular struggles of a particular place . . . These kinds of targeted translation efforts are the building blocks of sustained political information campaigns and collaborations. (Selim: 85)

The two former examples (El-Tamami and Selim) are indicative of the exploratory mode in which the Arab world seems to find itself by investigating the possible postures the Self can take in relation to the Other after a long period of fossilization, be it under exogenous or endogenous colonialism. Rethinking the concept of translation by translating the Arab sites of revolt and conflict means then to inquire about the potential avenues of liberating the Arab ethos from a credulous self-representation to a disquieting critical one.

The Algerian thinker Malek Bennabi wrote under French colonization that: “To stop being colonized, one has to stop being colonizable” (2005: 12). In the same vein, it can be argued that the only way to overcome the state of intellectual lethargy and political self-defeatism that has taken hold of the Arab world for the past centuries is to

reassess its position as compared with the Western Other, which amounts ultimately to revisit the notion of translation and the conditions under which it should take place.

3.2 *Assessing the Arab Human Development*

The UNDP's Arab Human Development Report Project (AHDR) is a series of publications by a select group of scholars and researchers entrusted to evaluate the problems and challenges encountering Arab societies at the turn of the new millennium. Taking into account the challenges and opportunities the region was encountering, three major “development deficits” were found at the outcome of the first report (2002): knowledge, women empowerment, and freedom.

As a result of deeper analysis performed on the first development deficit, the 2003 report, entitled *Building a Knowledge Society*, sought to highlight the main constraints hampering the acquisition, production, and diffusion of knowledge in the Arab world. Although affirming a great potential for development and knowledge advancement particularly in light of the medieval culture of scholarship where it was established that “[t]ranslation is closely connected to scientific research and creativity” (AHDR, 2003: 43), the report nonetheless emphasized a piece of quantitative comparison that caused outrage and tremor across the region. It argued that

[N]otwithstanding the increase in the number of translated books from 175 per year during 1970-1975 to 330, the number of books translated in the Arab world is one fifth of the number translated in Greece. The aggregate total of translated books from the Al-Ma'mun era to the present day amounts to 10,000 books - equivalent to what Spain translates in a single year. (AHDR, 2003: 67)

This shocking finding pointed to the fact that the Arab world's concept of translation is an entry point to the development of a mechanism that would foster the assimilation and production of an indigenous Arabic science. According to the report, it is stated that beyond narrow motivations of Arab nationalism, “Arabization efforts should run parallel to efforts to strengthen the teaching of foreign languages in all scientific disciplines.” (AHDR, 2003: 124)

As an offshoot of the AHDR series, a new series of reports co-sponsored by the United Nation's Development Program and the United Arab Emirates were devoted to Arab knowledge, the first titled *Toward Productive Intercommunication for Knowledge* (2009). This report notably articulated a proposed vision to build a knowledge-based society through the bolstering of three axes, the second being of utmost interest to us, which is “the transfer and indigenization of knowledge”. This aspect of the vision starts by emphasizing the necessity to revitalize Arabic thought through the development of Arabic language. However, in order to achieve this goal, a process of cross-fertilization needs to be promoted between languages, which would require the support of translation efforts. More specifically, the report argues that

Translation contributes to the development of indigenised intellectual production and opens it to the possibility of looking at phenomena and reality from new angles. Indigenisation is not, therefore, simply transfer. It is a composite operation that combines

transfer, translation, education, training, and all activities that transform what is transferred from an imported action into a well rooted action. (AKR, 2009: 229)

Here translation gains, yet again, a new dimension, which is the purported ability to re-center the production of knowledge through the promotion of Arabic language that would ultimately become a language of science if developed along cross-cultural and interlinguistic exchanges. Here, fostering translation in the Arab world would mean reinforcing Arabic in educational institutions: A state of affairs that is very far from even being initiated in many Arab countries that encourage more learning (in) English than (in) Arabic. Moreover, it must be noted that the concept of indigenization being promoted here helps shed light on that of translation thanks to its requirement of giving more weight to the target language/culture when integrating a new body of knowledge.

We connect indigenisation with the principle of inscribing local, specific, and intrinsic character both during and after the process of indigenisation, so that transferred information becomes part of the structure of the society to which it has been transferred and it does not remain simply a piece of information that has been copied and is alien to its new environment. Indigenisation is the absorption and testing of what is transferred. (AKR, 2009: 232)

The final report discussed here is entitled *Youth and the Localisation of Knowledge* (2014). Consistently with the previous ones, this report takes a more specific aim at developing the young generations' knowledge by drilling down the notion of translation, but this time considered as "transfer and localization." As a matter of fact, the latter pair of concepts seems to confirm and specify that of indigenization and, further, that of translation. While indigenization was emphasizing the necessity to adapt knowledge to the Arab culture, connect it to the Arab heritage, and express it in the Arabic language, the notion of localization entails the repatriation of knowledge at the heart of the Arab Self through the means of adaptive transformations aiming at appropriating the localized knowledge as if it were a local product. In this sense, translation would essentially mean what has been practiced when the Arab Self rose to its highest level of confidence, i.e. Arabization.

The UNDP reports have two main objectives from the perspective of the present investigation of the concept of translation in the Arab tradition. The first is to assess the state of affairs in the Arab world from this perspective. The second is to propose a rational plan of action that would ultimately align the goals of a knowledge-based economy with a revisited understanding of translation through its triple avatars: transfer, indigenization, and localization. But despite the relevance of the reports' findings, reflections, and recommendations, the overall impact on the ground may be rather limited. Indeed, as I'm writing these lines and considering the political turmoil that is characterizing the Arab world as a whole (whether as a battleground or as warfare funders), it would be ambitious or naïve to think that such precious pieces of work would deflect the political will of the Arab ruling class from its present course and up the hill of development.

3.3 Reclaiming Difference

Just as the quick overview on translation during the Egyptian revolution was only meant to be a sample from the Mashreq (Eastern part) of the Arab world, this section will offer a snippet from the Maghreb (Western part) of the Arab world. Let me recall that the objective of this report is not to rigorously ‘map out’ the many concepts of translation coming from the different parts of the 23 countries constituting the Arab world—not even counting Arab diasporas all over the planet. In fact, I have rather sought to build a narrative that would give a broad outline of a logical and plausible evolution of the concept of translation throughout the Arab world’s long history and wide space. Hence, this final section will only cover the thought of a Moroccan philosopher.

Taha Abderrahmane (1944-), a leading philosopher of language, logic, ethics and—exceptionally so—translation, will be our symbolic sample for the concept of translation coming from the Maghreb. Although virtually unknown to Western readers (because almost completely untranslated so far) and barely so to Arab readers themselves (because of the limited interest in philosophy in today's Arab world), Abderrahmane is nevertheless a unique example of a prolific Arab author (over 20 books) who has given translation a central position in his philosophical thought. But what feeds even more into the exclusivity of his profile is definitely the apparent exceptionalism he is trying to build up for his philosophy and for Arab philosophy at large. Hence one of his founding works is titled *Al-Haqq al-arabi fi l-ikhtilaf al-falsafi* [The Arab Right to Philosophical Difference] (2002, my translation) as a means to localize philosophy in the Arab locale and cultural heritage. However, it should be clearly mentioned from the outset that this re-positioning does not dispense with a harsh critique of Western modernity and even with many figures of the Arab intellectual landscape, whether contemporary or historical. This critique will inevitably insert this section in line with the previous ones, in other words in the broad perspective of a postcolonial approach.

To understand Abderrahmane’s stance toward translation and the place it occupies in his thought, one should contextualize his conception in the broader framework of his attempt at “re-grounding Arab-Islamic philosophy in its original sources (*al-manhag al-usuli*) for the practice of thought from within, as if going back to the early stage of Arab-Islamic philosophy.” (Hashas, 2015: 75) This would be achieved by concentrating his “energies on questions the Arab-Muslim philosopher faces, and not questions imposed by external/hegemonic philosophy of the West that has its own questions.” (Idem: 76) Through the persistent pursuit of difference, Abderrahmane’s critical philosophy aims at embracing what he terms the ideal of philosophy, that is the liberation of thought. In the above-mentioned book, he argues: “We, the Arabs, want to be free in our philosophy.” (Abderrahmane, 2002: 22) What he stresses is the right and necessity for the Arabs to liberate themselves from blind conformity and imitation when performing philosophy, and by extension, any intellectual activity. Not only have Arabs blindly imitated the *substance* of Western philosophy, e.g., the Greek division or even divorce between reason and faith, but they have also imitated the *form* in the very manner Western thought has been introduced into the Arab library. This means that Arab philosophy—going as far back as medieval philosophers (Abderrahmane, 1994)—has been translated slavishly without any consideration for what he himself terms as his “obsession”, i.e. *originality*. (Abderrahmane, 2006)

According to Abderrahmane, originality embodies for Arab philosophy (and Arab culture more generally) the privileged means to enter *modernity*. However, in order to

overcome the lack of originality that he believes Arabic philosophy is plagued with, the only way out is to reconnect with Arabic cultural currency (*al-majal al-tadawuli*), or, put otherwise, Arabic heritage imagination in circulation within the Arabic cultural social space. This means that originality can never happen unless the Arab intellectual is nurtured with the quotidian practical Arab reality including all its knowledge, problems, concerns, hopes and horizons. Original philosophy needs to relink with the fluid but palpable flow of Arab reality (Abderrahmane, 2011: 42).

But originality is not easy to make happen. It supposes a long process of self-transformation whereby the relationship to the Other needs to be revisited so that originality in philosophy can actually be realized and have the Arab reader equipped with the means that will enable her to philosophize in Arabic. To achieve this purpose, Abderrahmane suggests a sort of reverse pedagogy for the translation of philosophy consisting of three stages. The first is to implement what he calls the principle of “foundational translation” (my translation), which consists of bringing the main philosophical meanings of the source text in a way that would connect them to *al-majal al-tadawuli*, i.e. the quotidian Arabic cultural currency of the reader so that it can get rooted in her psyche and prompt a kind of synergy, some sort of intrinsic forces to flourish from within. When this most exigent type of translation gets mastered, the next principle can be applied, that is “communicative translation” (my translation) which allows for meanings of the source text to be conveyed, knowing that the Arab reader of philosophy would be able by then to take in contents that are not necessarily connected to the Arabic currency. At the third stage, it would be possible to move on to the “acquisitive/perceptive translation” (my translation) principle, which consists of a more faithful transfer of the source text in its entire linguistic and formal granularity (Abderrahmane, 2011: 43), a strategy that may be assimilated to the foreignizing strategy as found in Venuti (1995/2008).

All the above reconceptualization of translation and its pedagogy is aiming at enabling the Arabic reader to independently philosophize along with the translated text, and by the same token to set in motion a methodical education for the production of an original Arabic philosophy. This new “vision for the practice of translation,” argues Abderrahmane, “deserves more than any other the name of ‘modernity’ [*al-hadathah*], because modernity means [in Arabic] the occurrence [*al-ihdath*].” (Abderrahmane, 2011: 44) This means that a foundational translation of philosophy would entail the engagement into an original conversation ‘coming from oneself’ [*istihdath*], because what makes something modern (as opposed to what is slavishly imitated and borrowed almost in its original form) is to make it ‘occur’ [*mustahdath*] in the local historicity of the Arab world as a genuine event created from its own breeding-ground. The concept of modernity—in line with the Arabic root of the term [*h-d-th*] meaning ‘occurring’ or ‘happening’—is then for the Arab philosopher the very consequence and condition of the advent of philosophical originality (Idem: 45). To be modern is to translate in such a creative way that one’s philosophy is considered “mature” and “independent”, as Abderrahmane puts it elsewhere (2006), because detached from any hegemonic Other.

In sum, Abderrahmane’s philosophy of translation [*falsafat al-tarjamah*] (1996) seems to stand as a quasi-direct response to translation as the (not always conscious) surrender of the Self to the (Western) Other—as in the 2nd translation movement. Abderrahmane’s notion of translation hence becomes the resisting Arab postcolonial

ethos against the self-inflicted hegemon of the search for recognition by the powerful Other. A revisited and ethically self-exigent understanding of translation should allow for the re-founding of a modernity that is not its Western instance, but rather a full-fledged and independent Arab version.

4. Conclusion

After reviewing the evolution and the different instances of the concept of translation in the Arab world, a short concluding reflection may be necessary. While the rise and fall of the Self in the face of or in relation to the Other has been following the vagaries of civilizations' expressions of power and irradiations, it can be noted that the development of the concept of translation does not always and exactly shadow these delineations. In fact, it seems that the weaker and less secure cultures feel about themselves in terms of their capabilities to produce good translations and original knowledge, the more they are empowered to expand their notion of translation to some new horizons of the concept whereby it can benefit in scope and depth. Although the diversity of the Arab world's concepts of translation is not a specific feature of this geo-linguistic area and tradition, it shows however the deep impacts of their transformations and the consciousness of their stakes over the very constitution of the Arab ethos and the promises of its future.

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