

# The Factors Governing the Availability of Maghrebi Literature in English: A Case Study in the Sociology of Translation

*Factores que determinan la disponibilidad de la literatura magrebí en inglés: un estudio de casos en la sociología de la traducción*

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**Abstract:** The present article draws on a corpus of into-English translations of works by Maghrebi authors working in Arabic and French to study the channels by which they reach an English-language readership and the relative places of the two languages in the target literary and publishing polysystems. It examines the hurdles faced by Arabic-language writers in achieving international visibility, particularly the weakly structured nature of the source publishing sphere and the ethnographic frame that dominates their reception, and challenges chronologies of Arabic-to-English translation which foreground Naguib Mahfouz's 1988 Nobel Prize win as a turning point. It demonstrates that the driving forces behind into-English translations of Maghrebi writers have rather been the enfranchisement of Maghrebi French writing in the French literary and publishing polysystems, particularly Tahar Ben Jelloun's 1987 Prix Goncourt win, the rise of Francophone Studies within the

Anglo-American academy, and the ethnographic frame that saw a cluster of «terrorism memoirs» translated in reaction to events in Algeria in the 1990s.

**Key words:** Algeria; Arabic; French; Maghreb; Morocco; polysystem; publishing; sociology of translation; Tunisia.

**Resumen:** El presente artículo se basa en un corpus de traducciones hacia el inglés de autores de origen magrebí que trabajan en árabe y francés para estudiar los medios que utilizan para llegar a los lectores angloparlantes y el lugar relativo que ocupan los dos idiomas en los poli-sistemas literarios y editoriales. Se examinaron los obstáculos que enfrentan los escritores de lengua árabe para lograr la visibilidad internacional, en concreto la estructura debilitada de la fuente de la esfera publicada y el marco etnográfico que domina su recepción, y desafía las cronologías del árabe al inglés en el plano de la traducción de Naguib Mahfouz, premio Nobel de 1988, quien marcó un punto de inflexión. Se demostró que la fuerza impulsora detrás de las traducciones de escritores magrebíes había sido la aceptación de la literatura francesa- magrebí en el polisistema literario y editorial, en particular Tahar Ben Jelloun, premio Goncourt 1987, el aumento de estudios de habla francesa en la academia anglo-norteamericana, y el marco etnográfico donde se observó un grupo de “autobiografías terroristas” traducidas en reacción a los acontecimientos sucedidos en Argelia en la década de los 90.

**Palabras clave:** Argelia; árabe; francés; Magreb; Marruecos; polisistema; publicación; sociología de la traducción; Túnez.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Much recent research in Translation Studies has highlighted the need to take account of social, political, economic, legal, cultural, or otherwise ideological factors in determining translation policy. One of the most significant aspects of the so-called sociological turn in Translation Studies has been a new-found recognition of the importance of considering translations not simply as texts, but also as material artefacts, with their own paratextual strategies and nexuses of production and consumption: translation is as much a matter of the circulation of books as material artefacts as it is of texts. The present article draws on the corpus of Maghrebi<sup>1</sup> literature in English translation for a study of the factors governing the selection of titles for translation.

The corpus<sup>2</sup> of translations into English from the Maghrebi Arabic and French (included as an appendix to the present article in this issue) provides a striking illustration

1 The present article uses the term «Maghreb» in its usual English academic meaning to refer to Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

2 Note on methodology: figures on international translation rates are difficult to collate for a number of reasons. The principal national library catalogues do not allow searches by language translated. UNESCO's Index Translationum is not a complete source, with data from

of Pascale Casanova's theory of the unequal distribution of literary capital across languages (Casanova 2002). Arabic has around one hundred million more speakers worldwide than French, but is translated far less frequently. It is the dominant language of publication within the Maghreb region, accounting for around 65% of indigenous book production in Tunisia (Pinhas 2005, 66) and 70% in Morocco (UNESCO 2005, 35)<sup>3</sup>. Yet as figure 1 demonstrates, this proportion is by no means reflected in the rate of translation of works by Maghrebi authors into English. There have been 49 translations from the Maghrebi Arabic in the post-war period, compared to 131 by Maghrebi authors writing in French. (Tamazight, also known as Berber—a minority language in the region in both numerical and political terms—has been the source language for three translations of orally transmitted folk tales and poetry since the start of the twentieth century).

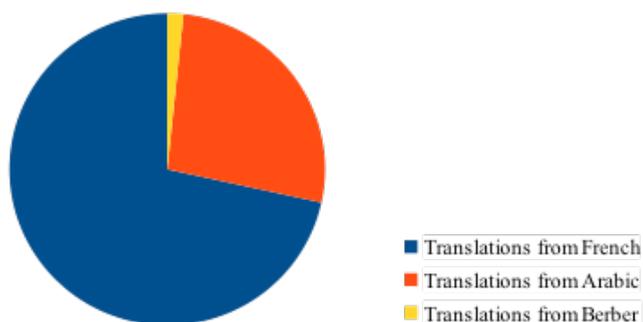


Figure 1. Proportion of works translated from the Maghrebi French, Arabic and Berber in the corpus

peripheral languages being particularly deficient (Sapiro 2008). The corpus was therefore compiled from a variety of sources, principally the LIMAG database (<http://www.limag.refer.org/new/index.php?inc=schart>), the Three Percent series of databases (<http://www.rochester.edu/College/translation/threepencent/index.php?s=database>), and the Index Translationum (<http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/>), all accessed 15 September 2015, cross-checked with national library catalogues in France, the US and the UK. The method of compilation means that translations published in the author's country of origin rather than the target culture are likely to be somewhat under-represented; the Tunisian national bibliography for 2010, for example, records a dozen or so English translations of children's books (a genre not covered in the present corpus) by Widjène Sadok Charaf published by the Société Tunisienne d'édition et de production culturelle that do not appear in Worldcat, Index Translationum, or national library catalogues in Europe or the US. However, the circulation of such books beyond their country of origin is very low. The corpus includes translations of novels, life-writing, and theatre, but not poetry or theoretical, academic or political writings, by authors whose family and/or cultural background lies in the Maghreb, excluding *piéd noir* writers. A small number of the authors in the corpus are from dual Franco-Maghrebi or Beur backgrounds: given the inextricable complexities of categorising such personal identities, the corpus has erred on the side of inclusivity to incorporate authors such as Azouz Begag and Faïza Guène whose writings are informed by their family background in the Maghreb.

3 The figure is unavailable for Algeria.

A study of the conditions in which books journey in translation from the Maghreb to the English-speaking world must take into account the conditions in which they are produced and circulated in their culture of origin. However, precise data on the region's book markets is hard to come by, itself an indication that the sector remains weakly structured. It should be noted that the book markets in the three countries each have their own specific characteristics, particularly in terms of the nature and degree of state intervention in the sector (Pinhas 2005; Mermier 2005); furthermore, they have inevitably evolved over the course of the period. The Tunisian publishing sector underwent liberalisation in the 1970s, though around half of the national output remains in the public sector, particularly educational materials. There are currently somewhere in the region of fifty publishers and 100 book sales points in the country for a population of 11 million; the sector grew from 853 titles in 1992 to 1,383 in 2003, with Arabic increasing from 49% to 68% over the period (Tunisia factsheet, 2010). In Morocco, commercial publishing began in the 1980s; there are an estimated fifty publishers active in the country, mostly in the private sector. Production rose from 329 titles in 1990 to 1,734 in 2012, again with the proportion of titles in Arabic increasing over the period. Morocco has only around thirty book sales points, including itinerant «caravan» shops, for a population of 33 million; the online bookshop <http://livremoi.ma> opened in 2014, indicating that the field is becoming increasingly structured (Morocco factsheet, 2014). In Algeria, state control remained a feature of the sector until 1985, with only two publishers authorised prior to that date. Some twenty-five publishers opened following the advent of political pluralism in 1998, only six of which survived the civil strife of the 1990s. The twenty-first century has seen a considerable increase in the number of publishers, once more thanks to state support for the sector; at the same time, the number of sales points has shrunk from ninety-five in 1997 to some thirty today (Daum 2013), serving a population of nearly forty million, compared to 3,746 in Britain for a population of 64 million (Clark 2014).

Algeria	1 per 1,333,000 inhabitants
Morocco	1 per 1,100,000 inhabitants
Tunisia	1 per 110,000 inhabitants
Great Britain	1 per 17,000 inhabitants

*Table 1. Book sales points per head of population  
(not including online sales)*

Above and beyond their differences, however, the book sectors in each country share with each other and with the book market across the wider Arab region a number of features that distinguish them from the situation in Western Europe and the United States, where the book markets are highly structured fields characterised by a significant degree of professionalization. Book production and distribution in the Arab world tends to be far less established as a field, particularly outside the main publishing centres of

Cairo and Beirut. The Moroccan author Jalal El Hakmaoui notes that publishers do not have the resources to develop their own publishing programmes, while the publisher Abdelkader Retnani points out that Moroccan publishing companies are in many cases run by one individual who oversees the entire process from selecting manuscripts to selling the finished book (Hamrouch 2007). As a result, there are a number of obstacles to the international circulation of books from the region, such that Tunisia exported just €136,000 of books to France in 2010 (Tunisia factsheet 2010). The obstacles facing exports include the prevalence of the self-publishing model: nearly 32% of books are self-published in Morocco, some 33% of which, around 300 titles, are literary in nature (UNESCO 2005, 24 and 27). Secondly, as the figures above show, the book distribution network is sparse. Thirdly, piracy is prevalent throughout the region, which means that Western publishers are often reluctant to dialogue with their Maghrebi counterparts (Rogan 2004, 70). Writers in the Maghreb thus face many of the same difficulties as their counterparts in sub-Saharan Africa outlined in Larson (2001).

These difficulties mean titles printed and distributed in the Maghreb are highly unlikely to benefit from international promotion or come to the attention of an English-speaking reader who, in other circumstances, might have initiated a translation. As a result, authors with ambitions towards achieving an audience in the West tend to cross over to the metropolis, both linguistically—writing in French rather than Arabic or Berber—and in terms of publishing norms, working within a standardised contractual framework and working with a professional editorial and marketing team, for instance. In doing so, they follow a well-trodden path taken by numerous Maghrebi intellectuals, for whom Paris became a key stepping stone towards an international career in the post-war period (Brisson 2008; Leonhardt Santini 2006). Significantly, all but six<sup>4</sup> of the authors translated from the French are published in Paris, where the more structured field of publication and distribution means that they become visible to a Western readership in a way that their counterparts publishing in the Maghreb are not. As Aijaz Ahmad notes,

Literature produced in the ex-colonial countries but produced directly in languages which had been imported initially from Europe provides one kind of archive for the metropolitan university to construe the textual formation of Third World Literature; but this is not the only archive available, for the period after decolonisation has also witnessed great expansion and consolidation of literary traditions in a number of

4 The exceptions are one bilingual edition published in Toronto; one novel published in Arles by Actes Sud, a company with excellent symbolic capital despite its distance from the publishing centre in Paris and a long-established collection of Arabic literature in translation in its Sindbad imprint (Leonhardt Santini 2006); three novels published in Casablanca and one in Tunis.

indigenous languages as well. [...] Not much of this kind of literature is directly available to the metropolitan literary theorists because, erudite as they usually are in metropolitan languages, hardly any of them has ever bothered with an Asian or an African language (Ahmad 1994, 78).

As a result, while *texts* by Maghrebi authors such as Assia Djebar and Malika Mokkeddem have explored post-colonialist themes, the conditions in which their *books* have tended to be produced and circulated as material artefacts remain dominated by a neo-colonialist paradigm.

## 2. TRANSLATING FROM THE MAGHREBI ARABIC

Modern Arabic literature occupies a hyper-marginal position in the West (Heilbron 2010), which, as has often been noted, reads the Arab world almost exclusively through a geopolitical frame. The correlation between translational and research activity is strong in such a specialised field: the majority of literary translators from the Arabic—at least sixteen out of the twenty-two for whom biographical information has been forthcoming<sup>5</sup>—also occupy positions within the academy. As Edward Said noted, the field of modern Arab studies grew out of «such things as the army language schools established during and after the war, sudden government and corporate interest in the non-Western world during the post-war period, [and] Cold War competition with the Soviet Union» (Said 1978, 291). Said's hypothesis is confirmed by the profiles and backgrounds of twentieth-century British Arabists (McLoughlin 2002) and by US and UK government policies on the provision of Arabic language teaching in higher education; in the US, the National Defense and Education Act of 1958 provided federal support for teaching the language as part of its efforts to train «defence oriented personnel» (Khalifa and Elgindy 2014, 46), while in the UK, the 1961 Hayter report, which shaped teaching and research in Oriental Studies in the latter half of the twentieth century, focused on the need to develop a strong «area studies» approach. The emphasis on a geopolitically determined area studies approach has tended to sideline the Maghreb as a research focus within Arabic departments in the Anglo-American academy: the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies database of experts currently offers eleven specialists for the entire Maghreb region affiliated to UK academic institutions, as against 32 for Egypt. This institutional slant against the Maghreb as a field of research in the Anglo-American academy is apparent in primers such as Roger Allen's *Modern Arabic Literature* (1987). As Allen acknowledges in the preface, any such work «reflect[s] current realities in the fields of both literary criticism and theory and some of the more practical ramifications

5 The total does not include self-translations.

of the present state of biobibliographical research in Arabic literature studies»; his work «has been prepared in the United States for an English-speaking readership and has had to rely in the main on Arabic and Western resources available there» (Allen 1987, viii). Because the bulk of critical writing is on Lebanese and Egyptian writers, this is where he too places his focus, creating a vicious circle which perpetuates the marginalisation of less-studied authors and regions. As a result, few English-language translators have worked on Maghrebi texts.

Consequently, the chronologies of translation from the Arabic outlined by Altoma (1996) and Khalifa and Elgindy (2014), both of which define Naguib Mahfouz's 1988 Nobel Prize win as the start of a new phase which saw Arabic literature move to a more central position in the international literary polysystem (Even-Zohar 1990), are less applicable in the Maghrebi context, as the following graph of translation rates demonstrates.

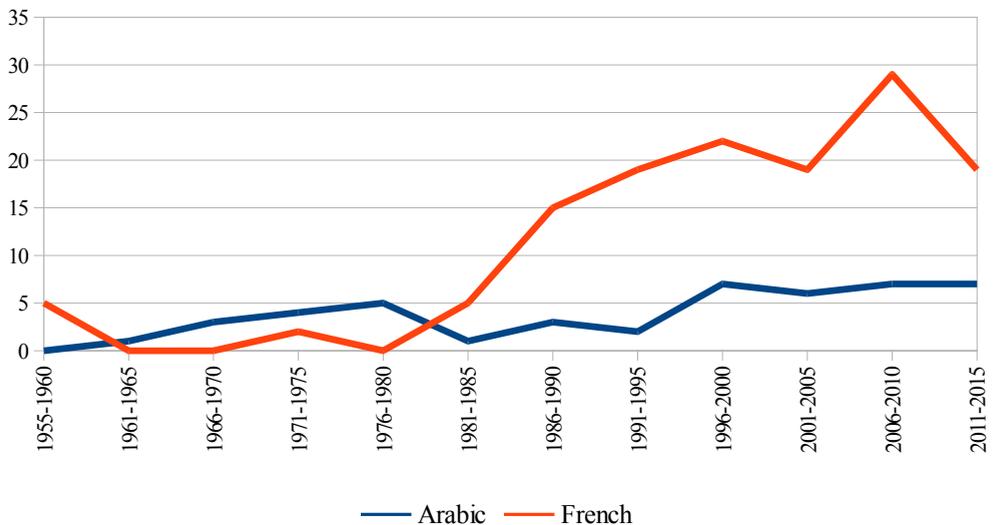


Figure 2. Works translated from the Maghrebi Arabic and French to English, 1955-2015 (excluding multi-authored volumes)<sup>6</sup>

While Mahfouz's win undeniably led to a considerable increase in the visibility of modern Arabic writing in the West, with two-thirds of the 322 works listed in Salih Altoma's 1996 bibliography published after 1988, its impact on writing from the Maghreb was limited. The corpus of translated works «continues to show a skewed

<sup>6</sup> Data for the period 2011-2015 is provided for purposes of comparison, though it should be noted that this data is necessarily incomplete as it does not include works currently in the process of translation and / or publication; the impression of a sharply declining translation rate from the French over this five-year period should thus be treated with caution.

pattern of representation resulting from the predominance of Egyptian authors» (Altoma 2000, 66) with roughly 170 out of 322 from the country—a situation that can largely be attributed to support from institutions such as the General Egyptian Book Organisation (GEBO), the AUC Press, and the American Research Centre. However, as a detailed breakdown of translation figures from 1980 to 2005 makes clear, what might be termed the «Mahfouz bounce» was limited in terms of writing from the Maghreb, with little increase in translations from the Arabic in the immediate aftermath of 1988; what small increase there was took place over a decade later and was numerically relatively insignificant.

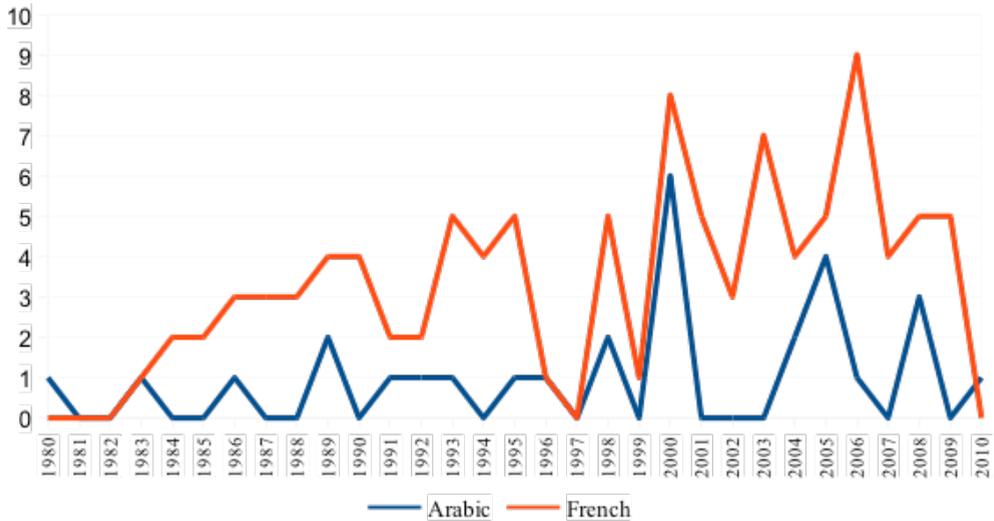


Figure 3. Rates of translation from the Maghrebi Arabic and French, 1980-2010.

Similarly, Khalifa and Eljindy (2014)'s proposed fourth «post-9/11» phase, though doubtless significant in terms of translation rates for the language as a whole and particularly for countries such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia, appears to be of little relevance in translations from the Maghrebi Arabic. This is a salutary reminder that the Arab literary sphere should not be approached as «some singular cultural monolith» (Toler 2001, 48), as national cultural spheres and the corresponding publishing polysystems have specific characteristics that affect how works produced within them circulate internationally.

Remarkably, all translations from the Maghrebi Arabic prior to 1989 were by one man. The author and translator Paul Bowles (1910-1999) was well known as a cultural mediator between Morocco and the United States. The majority of his translations were of recordings of oral literature recounted by his friend Mohamed Mrabet. Many of these were published by City Lights in San Francisco in the late 1960s and early to mid-1970s, placing them firmly within the counter-culture movement. The rise from

the mid-1990s represents a gradual broadening of interest from scholars in the region, drawn doubtless not only by Mahfouz's win but perhaps more significantly by current events in Algeria following the 1991 coup. This represents a shift in the literature's place within the English-language polysystem (Even-Zohar 1990) from a marginal, counter-culture literature to an academic ethnographic frame, due to the efforts of individual scholars to raise the literary profile of the region through translations, particularly of autobiographical writings by authors such as Hassan Nasr and Leila Abouzeid, published in specialist university press collections at the American University in Cairo, University of Texas in Austin, and, more recently, Syracuse University in New York.

While the overall number of translations remains too low to fully support the case that translation from the Maghrebi Arabic was beginning to coalesce as a field in its own right by the turn of the millennium, there are some signs that it has begun to share in the increased institutionalisation of translation from the Arabic that has resulted from the «Mahfouz bounce», leading to more established channels by which texts become available in translation. Recent years have seen attempts to expand Maghrebi Arabic writing beyond the restricted sphere of an academic audience. First of all, 1998 saw the first publication of a work that explicitly strove in its paratext to reach a broad general readership. Abdelilah Hamdouchi's *Final Bet* was translated by Jonathan Smolin, a faculty member in Arabic Studies at Dartmouth College, and published by AUC Press in Cairo, suggesting a restricted specialist readership in common with the prevailing trend for translations from the region. However, it was co-published by the then newly founded Arabia imprint in London, a joint venture by the independent publishers Haus and Arcadia, and was explicitly labelled as genre fiction. The cover claims it is «The first Arabic detective novel to be translated into English», representing a prescient early attempt to take advantage of the boom in crime fiction in English translation (Seago 2014).

Likewise, a number of book-related initiatives in recent years seeking to establish an independent field for Arabic translation in English have also had some, albeit as yet limited, impact on translations of Maghrebi Arabic writers. These include ventures such as the Saif Ghobash–Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation (2005), awarded to Roger Allen for his translation of Bensaulim Himmich's *Muslim Suicide* in 2012. The prize is sponsored by *Banipal*, a UK-based magazine founded in 1998 devoted to modern Arabic literature that has actively sought to promote Maghrebi literature in Arabic, for example in a special feature on Algeria in issue 7 (2000) and Tunisia in issue 39 (2010). Such initiatives have proved relatively effective in broadening translator profiles within the field of Arabic to English translation, diversifying from native Anglophone translators with «privileged educational backgrounds» (Guthrie and Büchler 2011, 8) to include native speakers of Arabic, such as the Palestinian-Canadian author and artist Fadwa al-Qasem; the age and gender of translators is also shifting, with more women and younger generations breaking into publication in such venues. In a related development,

local initiatives such as Tunisia’s National Centre for Translation (CENATRA), founded in 2006, and external sources of aid such as the Institut Français’s Salah Garmadi publishing support programme, also in Tunisia, have gone some little way to structuring the publishing and translation fields in the Maghreb. This has led to the emergence of local projects to translate Maghrebi-published authors, such as Hafedh Boujmil’s translation of Muhamad al-Arusi Matwi’s 1962 novel *Halima*, published in Tunis in 2008, and Abd al-Wahid Braham’s *Love in the Time of Madness*, translated by Fathi Dali for CENATRA in 2010. However, the impact of such initiatives remains limited and translation from the Maghrebi Arabic remains sporadic and weakly structured.

### 3. TRANSLATION FROM THE MAGHREBI FRENCH

Turning to the rate of translation from the Maghrebi French (fig. 3), the absolute numbers year on year remain relatively low, albeit higher than for Arabic. An analysis of the data by country reveals the significance of the political context in driving translation rates, with translations of works by Algerian authors rising steeply in the period 1991-1995, coinciding with the outbreak of civil strife in the country. While the rate dipped slightly in the period 1996-2000, authors from Algeria were consistently translated more than their Moroccan and Tunisian counterparts from 1990 on. Maghrebi French authors thus remained largely positioned within the same ethnographic frame as their counterparts writing in Arabic.

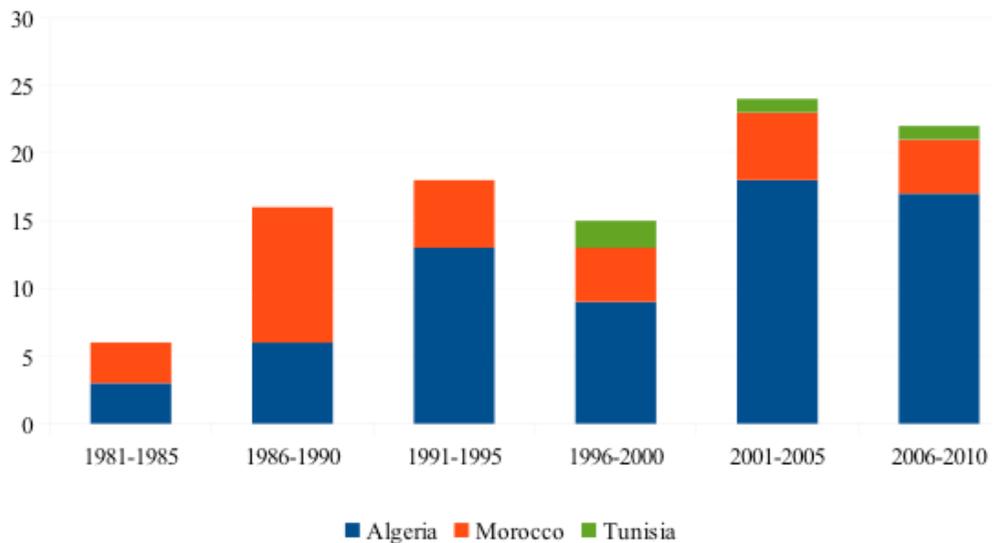


Fig. 4. Translations from the Maghrebi French by author’s country of origin, 1981-2010

It is apparent from figures 2 and 3 that the trend towards increasing rates of translation predates Mahfouz's October 1988 Nobel win, particularly considering the necessary time lag between such an award and the publication of a translation, a process likely to take at least a year if not more in the case of a literary sphere not yet firmly anchored in the Anglo-American publishing field<sup>7</sup>; even much-anticipated translations subject to rights bidding contests, like Rajaa Alsanea's *Girls of Riyadh* and Alaa al-Aswany's *Yacoubian Building*, took two years to make the journey from initial publication in Arabic to publication in English.

The upward swing beginning in the early- to mid-1980s rather reflects the increasing enfranchisement of Maghrebi authors within the French literary field, a trend both acknowledged and entrenched in 1987 by the award of France's most prestigious literary award, the Prix Goncourt, to Tahar Ben Jelloun, the first Maghrebi author so honoured. The enormous success of Ben Jelloun's *Nuit sacrée*, which sold 1.5 million copies, led mainstream Parisian publishers increasingly to see Maghrebi authors as desirable commodities—as long as they wrote in accordance with reader expectations. Thus, as Farid Laroussi writes,

Authors such as Ferial Assima, Latifah Ben Mansour, Maissa Bey, Malika Boussouf, Nina Hayat, Naila Imaksen, Leila Marouane, Malika Mokeddem, or Hafsa Zinaï-Koudil have in common the fact that they are all women, they were published in France in the 1990s, and they are writing about women in Algeria. While the literary value of their respective works can be discussed at length, such a conjunction of facts and themes questions the value of Maghrebi Francophone literature as a postcolonial commodity produced in France for French readers (Laroussi 2003, 88).

The shift of authors towards the centre of the French literary sphere made them more accessible to the Anglo-American academy, as the books were produced and consumed in the metropolis, making them available, as Aijaz Ahmad has noted «for the metropolitan university to examine, explicate, categorize, classify and judge as to [their] worthiness for inclusion within its curriculum and canon» (Ahmad 2000, 80). Accordingly, it is interesting to compare the chronology of translations from the Maghrebi French with the enfranchisement of Francophone Postcolonial Studies and of World Literature in the English-speaking academy.

Although there had been individual specialists in the field from the 1970s, Francophone Postcolonial Studies only became fully institutionalised in the early

7 For a comparable situation, the Hungarian writer Imre Kertész's Nobel Prize win in 2002 was followed by two English translations in 2004 (originals published 1975 and 2003), two in 2008 (originals published 1977), one in 2009 (original published 1991) and one in 2011 (original published 1988).

2000s, as shown by events such as the founding of the Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies in 2002 and the publication of primers such as Charles Forsdick and David Murphy's *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction* in 2003 and Kamal Salhi's *Francophone Postcolonial Cultures* the same year. Salhi's introduction implicitly acknowledged the field's ongoing enfranchisement by stating «It is hoped that these studies will provide a new critical introduction to this increasingly popular area within French Studies. For some time there has been a need among academics and students for a book of this kind in English that deals with a wide range of subjects and a large geographical area in one volume and that can be used fruitfully for research and teaching purposes» (Salhi 2003, xi). As Anne Donadey and H. Adlai Murdoch note, the arrival of Francophone Postcolonial Studies in the Western academy had a major impact on «scholarship, syllabi, and the structure of academic French departments». It represented something of a lifeline for courses suffering from dwindling enrollments. At the same time, the wider academy was facing a new challenge: a «homogenized global economy in which the lingua franca is expected to be English» was promoting an «increased commitment to internationalizing the curriculum», while also leading to a loss of interest in multilingual competency (Donadey 2005). Scholars in the field saw the expansion of the curriculum from literature to a broader-based programme of cultural studies, including «cross-departmental dialogue, team-teaching, and the cross-listing of courses» (Thomas 2005, 250), as a way of safeguarding a discipline under threat of becoming mere language service providers. World Literature became institutionalised as a field of specialism at around the same time, growing out of sophisticated «tangled» readings of history that emphasised not national traditions but processes of intercultural transfer and exchange; together with the growth in Translation Studies, translation—while still not counting significantly towards an academic career—became a somewhat more respectable academic endeavour. This suggests that a significant force driving the translation policy for post-colonial literatures may well have been the need to cater for students enrolling on courses in World Literature yet unable to read texts in the original language. Clifford Landers's *Literary Translation: A practical guide* hints at the existence of such a market by advising would-be translators to «drop by local universities and see which authors are being read in foreign-language courses. Ask the professors what writings they might like to see available in English. Don't overlook the growing number of courses in literature in translation [...]. Browse college catalogs to find out what authors are hot at major centers of higher education» (Landers 2001, 15).

Further support for the hypothesis that translation rates were driven by the enfranchisement of Francophone Postcolonial Studies is provided by a diachronic analysis of the typology of publishers in the field. While mainstream publishers have only ever displayed limited interest in the field, independent and university presses

have displayed an increasing commitment to it. The engagement of university presses in the field began to rise in the early 1990s. The period saw a small cluster of what might be termed terrorism memoirs (Booth 2010, 155) published by university presses in response to events in Algeria, including works by Khalida Messaoudi, Tahar Djaout and Baya Gacemi. The same period saw a rise in the number of translations of works by female authors, suggesting that works by authors such as Malika Mokeddem and Nina Bouraoui were selected by translators from within the academy, such as K. Melissa Marcus and Marjorie Salvodon, with a research interest in Feminist Studies.

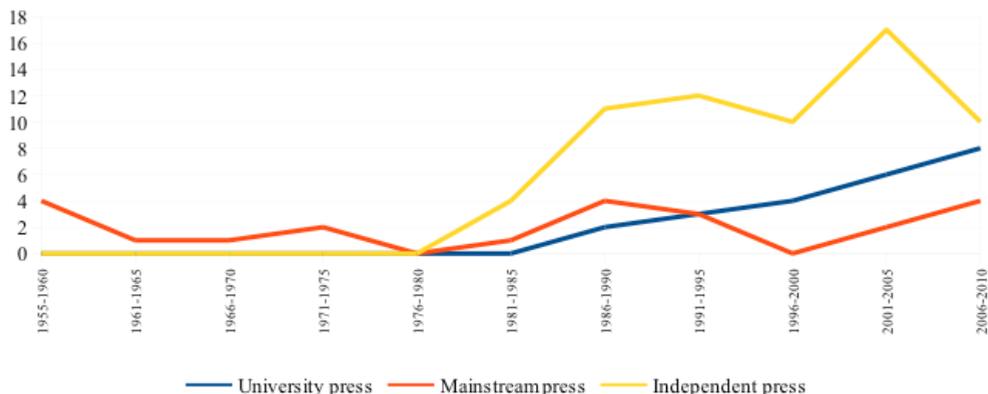


Figure 5. Typology of publishers of translations from the Maghrebi French and Arabic, 1955-2010.

An analysis of the gender distribution of translators over the period tends to support this hypothesis. As Donadey and Murdoch point out, «the point of entry of postcolonial theory into Francophone Studies has been primarily through postcolonial feminist theory» (Donadey and Murdoch 2001, 8), leading to increasing feminisation of the post-colonial canon. Once Maghrebi French writing begins to move to a more central position in the literary field in the late 1980s, the proportion of women translators increases sharply, overtaking men in the mid-1990s and reaching a peak in the early 2000s. The peak of women’s involvement in the field coincides with the autonomisation of Francophone Postcolonial Studies as a specialisation within the academy. The data also show a significant pattern of distribution in cross-referencing gender of author and translator with publisher category, with women translators publishing books by women authors with university presses (Fadhma Amrouche, Malika Mokeddem, Assia Djebar) and men translating books by men with mainstream presses; independent presses publish male and female translators of male authors more or less equally.

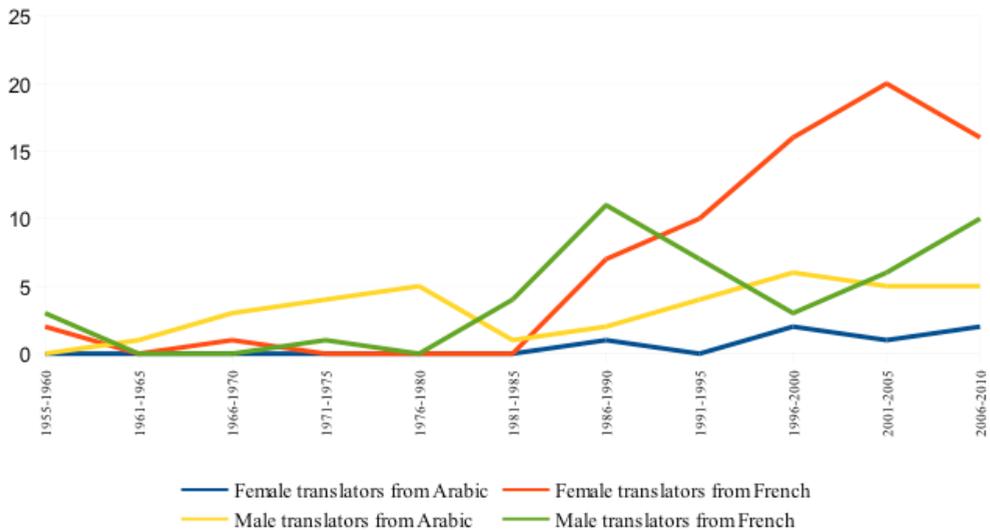


Figure 6. Translators by language and gender, 1955-2010

The hypothesis of the significance of the feminist ethnographic frame as a driving force for translation, with a particular emphasis on the place of women in Islamic society, is supported by a study of the paratext of translations from the period. No fewer than eighteen of the English editions from the mid-1980s on have covers featuring women in various forms of Islamic veil, from the hijab to the niqab and burqa. In some instances, such as Nedjma's *The Almond* and Amin Zaoui's *Banquet of Lies*, the veil is eroticised, showcasing the nude female form through transparency or clinging drapes and thereby playing into the harem trope. In others, an inappropriate image has been chosen, indicating that the cover has been chosen as a general signifier of the book's ethnographic horizon of expectation rather than as a guide to its actual content. Two works by Malika Mokeddem, an Algerian writer born in 1949, are a case in point. Her novel *Of Dreams and Assassins* is set in post-independence Oran where the heroine Kenza becomes a successful student, then in 1990s France and Canada where she seeks exile. The French cover has an image that is both culturally and thematically appropriate, featuring a young woman whose lightly made up face is framed by long dark hair. The English edition, on the other hand, features a full-length photograph of a woman whose features are invisible as she is swathed in a long black garment that resembles a burqa or chador, neither of which are traditionally worn in Algeria; furthermore, the Algerian haik tends to be white, particularly in Algiers and Oran where the novel is set (Lazreg 2009, 141). The image is also thematically inappropriate as in the Algerian context, far from being a symbol of female oppression, wearing the haik was seen as a subversive, anti-colonial act as women used it to participate in the struggle for independence by carrying messages or smuggling small items (Bullock 2002, 88). Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1998)

has a similarly thematically inappropriate cover: the image of the veiled woman is an «unambiguously misleading translation of the text» (Watts 2005, 169) as the eponymous character is forbidden precisely because she *refuses* to wear the veil. It also belies the novel's structure which alternates between two narrative voices – those of Sultana, an Algerian doctor living in exile in France, and of Vincent, a French tourist in Algeria – eliding the latter's presence in the paratext.

Another trend to emerge from the graph in figure 5 is the increasing engagement of independent presses with the sector. The trend began as early as the mid-1980s, driven doubtlessly by the process of enfranchisement of post-colonial literatures in English that saw, for example, Salman Rushdie win the Booker Prize in 1981. Much of this early rise was driven by translations of one canonical post-colonial Francophone author's prolific back catalogue: six works by Driss Chraïbi were translated between 1983 and 1990. The translation rate stagnated in the 1990s; again, the bulk of the translations at this point were of multiple works by a single author. Tahar Ben Jelloun's Prix Goncourt success led English-language publishers to delve into his back catalogue and then to translate subsequent works as they came out in French. He was joined in the 2000s by Yasmina Khadra and Leïla Sebbar, both of whom have had multiple works translated. However, a detailed study of the corpus reveals a gradual pattern of diversification over the course of the period: while seven authors had fewer than three titles translated in the 1980s, this grew to nine in the 1990s and seventeen in the first decade of the 2000s. This indicates a greater willingness by independent presses to take risks on a new generation of younger, non-canonical authors such as Aziz Chouaki, Mahi Binebine, Mounsi, and Faïza Guène, often for a young adult readership.

The past five years have seen a slight shift away from the ethnographic frame, with the emergence of translations of both genre and literary fiction in the works of authors such as Boualem Sansal and Salim Bachi, reflecting the normalisation of Maghrebi French writing within the French literary field; Sansal and Bachi are both published in France by Gallimard, which endows its authors with considerable literary capital, and in English by Bloomsbury and Europa (Sansal) and Pushkin (Bachi), companies with strong reputations for quality literary fiction, with a further specialism in translation in the cases of Europa and Pushkin. Literary fiction by Maghrebi authors writing in French now crosses into English using the same channels as their French counterparts and is published by mid-size independents working within the sphere of restricted production, such as Gallic Books, Other Press, and Quercus.

## 4. CONCLUSION

As in the case of the shift into genre fiction in Arabic, recent changes in the types of author translated and publisher categories hint at the emergence of a fledgling field

for Maghrebi French literature in English translation. In the case of French, however, the change in place within the English-language polysystem is shaped by factors somewhat different than is the case for Arabic. The driving forces are not individual cultural initiatives of the likes of *Banipal*, but the rise of Francophone and World Literature as fields of specialism within the academy, the increasing acceptance of Maghrebi authors outside the ethnographic frame within the French literary field, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, the growth and maturation of the young adult publishing market.

As Michael Toler notes, Maghrebi writers work in «a complex cultural landscape in which multiple languages interact» (Toler 2001, 48). This shapes the complex place available to Maghrebi authors within the English polysystem, which is more or less central depending on the language they write in. A detailed study of the corpus reveals that while Maghrebi French writers have gained a modicum of visibility and centrality within the English polysystem, Maghrebi writers working in Arabic remain marginalised, both as regards their colleagues working in French and fellow authors working in Arabic in other parts of the Arab world.

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