

## 'Travelling Traditions. Comparative Perspectives on Near Eastern Literatures'

### Workshop 'Nation and Translation'

June 18-20, 2007

Convenors: Dr. Samah Selim (IREMAM, Aix-en-Provence), Dr. Shaden Tageldin (Fellow of EUME), Dr. Erol Köroğlu (Fellow of EUME)

Venue: Europäische Akademie Berlin, Bismarckallee 46/48, 14193 Berlin

Since the early 1990s, the rapidly growing field of Translation Studies has come to represent a major interdisciplinary turn in the study of language and literature within and beyond Europe. Translation Studies has now emerged as a new hermeneutic axis in comparative literature and cultural studies, as proliferating journals and monograph series in the US, UK, Spain, Holland and China will testify. For the most part, however, these developments are largely taking place outside the orbit of Middle Eastern Studies, thus effectively isolating the study of the region's literary cultures from historical and theoretical developments in the field, as well as from a dynamic new axis of critical comparativism in the humanities at large.

The aim of this two-day workshop will be to take a first step in addressing this lacuna by assembling scholars working within a variety of textual and translational traditions - most prominently, those of the Middle East – to explore issues related to literary history and sociology, poetics of genre, cultural studies and philosophy.

The specific focus of the workshop will be the dynamic but often invisible political, aesthetic and epistemological links between literary culture, translation and identity-formation within and without the dominant Nation-State structures of modernity – modernity here being itself understood as a major *topos* of translation. The workshop will not however, limit itself to the modern period. Seminal translation moments of the classical and medieval worlds will also be examined in relation to contemporary critical discourses on (trans)nationalism and globalization.

The workshop will take place over two and a half days between June 18 and June 20, and will include seven panels and a concluding round-table session.

The following scholars have confirmed their participation:

Ian Almond (Berlin), Mona Baker (University of Manchester), Michael Beard (University of North Dakota), Nergis Lennon Ertürk (Binghamton University), Sameh F. Hanna (UCL, London), Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar (Boğaziçi University), Richard Jacquemond (Aix-en-provence), Erol Köroğlu (Boğaziçi University, Fellow Europe in the Middle East – The

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Middle East in Europe), Samia Mehrez (AU Cairo), Anwar Moghith (Helwan University), Oded Schechter (University of Chicago, Fellow Europe in the Middle East – The Middle East in Europe), Sunil Sharma (Boston University), Shaden Tageldin (University of Minnesota, Fellow Europe in the Middle East – The Middle East in Europe), Mona Tolba (Ain Shams University).

Europe in the Middle East - the Middle East in Europe is a five-year research program of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. This research program seeks to rethink key concepts and premises that link and divide Europe and the Middle East. It draws on the expertise of scholars in and outside of Germany and is embedded in university and extra-university research institutions in Berlin. The program builds upon the previous work of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin's Working Group Modernity and Islam and is funded by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung.



## **Workshop: Nation and Translation**

June 18-20, 2007

Venue: Europäische Akademie Berlin, Bismarckallee 46/48, 14193 Berlin 18-20 June, 2007

### **Schedule**

#### **Monday, June 18**

10-10:30 a.m.

Samah Selim (IREMAM, Aix-en-Provence), *Opening Remarks*

10:30-12:30 p.m. Session 1

**Mona Baker** (Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies, University of Manchester)

*Virtual Resistance: Activist Communities of Translators and Violent Conflict in the Middle East.*

**Richard Jacquemond** (Université d'Aix en provence), *Nation Building and Translation Policies in the Arab World.*

Moderator: **Samia Mehrez**

12:30-1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30-3:30 p.m. Session 2

**Mona Tolba** (Université Charles de Gaulle, Lille 3), *Les problèmes linguistiques de la réception de la traduction de Derrida en Egypte.*

**Anwar Mogith** (Helwan University), *Les préoccupations politiques et la réception des la pensée européenne dans le monde arabe: Le cas de Derrida.*

Moderator: **Richard Jacquemond**

3:30-4 p.m. Coffee Break



4-6 p.m. Session 3

**Erol Köroğlu** (Boğazici University, Fellow of EUME, 2006/7), *Lost in Nationalist Translation: Configurations, Appropriations and Translations of History in Adivar's 'The Shirt of Flame'*.

**Samia Mehrez** (American University in Cairo), *Translating Gender between the Local and the Global*.

Moderator: **Shaden Tageldin**

**Tuesday, June 19**

10:30-12:30 p.m. Session 4

**Shaden Tageldin** (University of Minnesota, Fellow of EUME 2006/7), *The Idea of Order at Cairo: Nation-Formation and the Imperial Urge toward Translatability*.

**Nergis Erturk** (Binghamton University, SUNY), *Translating into Ottoman*.

Moderator: **Erol Köroğlu**

12:30-1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30-3:30 p.m. Session 5

**Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar** (Boğaziçi University), *Translating the 'Popular' in Early Republican Turkey*.

**Sameh F. Hanna** (University College London), *Translation and nation: Translators' agency and the dictates of cultural production*.

Moderator: **Samah Selim**

3:30-4 p.m. Coffee Break

4-6 p.m. Session 6

**Michael Beard** (University of North Dakota), *Sîn is for safari*.

**Sunil Sharma** (Boston University), *Acts of Love: Azad Bilgrami (d. 1785) on Poetic Synthesis and Cultural Translation*.

Moderator: **Ian Almond**



**Wednesday, June 20**

10-12 p.m. Session 7

**Ian Almond** (Berlin), *Keeping the Turks out of Islam: Goethe's Ottoman Plan.*

**Oded Schechter** (University of Chicago, Fellow of EUME, 2006/7), *Translation as secular-national project: the case of Spinoza and Zionism.*

Moderator: **Michael Beard**

12-1 p.m.

Concluding Remarks

1 p.m. Lunch



## ABSTRACTS

**Dr. Ian Almond** (Berlin), *Keeping the Turks Out of Islam: Goethe's Ottoman Plan*

Examining the place of Turks and Ottomans in Goethe's work, and the manoeuvres the poet had to perform to prevent his Islamophilia from creating too many problems for his Turcophobia (and vice versa), I would like to reflect in particular on the use Goethe made (or didn't make) of Orientalists such as Diez, whose work on Ottoman thought and culture Goethe was intimately familiar with (he had read *Denkwürdigkeiten aus Asien* in the January of 1814), but which failed to influence Goethe's own extremely reductionist views of his nearest Muslim neighbours. In particular, I would like to consider the implications this has for the effect the presence of academic knowledge concerning foreign cultures actually has on its mainstream intelligentsia - and the extent to which major thinkers and writers such as Goethe were able to effectively filter the information they had at hand to suit their own agendas.

**Dr Mona Baker** (Centre for Translation & Intercultural Studies, University of Manchester)  
*Virtual Resistance: Activist Communities of Translators and Violent Conflict in the Middle East*

Faced with an increasingly polarized world in which the opportunities for remaining 'neutral' are continually being eroded, some translators have chosen to align themselves with dominant discourses and work for organisations such as the FBI or CIA in the US, the MI5 or GCHQ in Britain, or the Coalition Authority in Iraq. Others have chosen not to work with organisations that are actively involved in unethical or suspect agendas (for example refusing to translate for the Ministry of Defence in Britain or the IDF in Israel), opting instead to work with or for less controversial institutions: academic journal publishers, commercial organisations, welfare departments, etc. A growing number of translators, however, are choosing to go beyond this passive form of resistance by actively setting up and/or offering their services to networks of activists who unequivocally reject dominant narratives of the sources of conflict and seek to elaborate an alternative discourse of peace and justice that cuts across national and other boundaries. The internet now offers activist groups of translators such as Babels and Tlaxcala new opportunities for elaborating and practising a moral order in tune with their own narratives of the world, and translation enables them to elaborate alternative narratives across national and linguistic boundaries, to create an international community bound by a similar vision of the world and unhindered by linguistic frontiers. Significantly, the Middle East as an arena of conflict (Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq) features very prominently in the work of these groups.

Following a broad survey of the role of translation in today's conflict-ridden societies, this paper will discuss the emerging pattern of activist communities in the translation world, focusing on their positioning vis-à-vis violent conflict in the Middle East. The discussion



will draw on the notion of narrative as elaborated in Baker (2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, in press).

#### References

Baker, Mona (2005) 'Targamat al-sardiyyaat/Sardiyyaat al-targama' (Translation of Narratives/Narratives of Translation'), *Fossoul* 66(3): 21-34.

Baker, Mona (2006a) *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account*, London & New York: Routledge.

Baker, Mona (2006b) 'Translation and Activism: Emerging Patterns of Narrative Community', *The Massachusetts Review* 47(III): 462-484.

Baker, Mona (2007) 'Reframing Conflict in Translation', *Social Semiotics* 17(1).

Baker, Mona (in press, 2008). 'Resisting State Terror: Communities of Activist Translators and Interpreters', in Esperança Bielsa Mialet and Chris Hughes (eds) *Translating Terror: Globalisation and the New Planetary Wars*, London & New York: Routledge.

**Dr. Michael Beard** (University of North Dakota), *Sîn is for safari*.

My proposal for this conference is a brief passage from a work in progress, a meditation on the letters of the Arabic alphabet in which I attempt to make visible the aesthetic appeal of the visual medium of language and the (untranslatable) ways in which the visual context of an alphabet shapes the message—a process which may be particularly strong in the case of the Arabic alphabet.

The work in progress takes the form of a series of twenty-eight essays, each dealing with one of the letters of the Arabic alphabet (with four addenda to include the four letters added to Persian by Fadlallah of Astarabad in the 14th century), guided by a contemplation of words which begin with that letter, dividing them into thematic groups and telling narratives which center on words in which that letter is prominent. In my attempt to track the counter-currents of organization by sound and by the visual, a set of generic rules have evolved whereby each chapter requires a discussion of the letter's shape and its history, an attempt to find a theme evoked by that letter, and which in the process recounts at least one narrative.

*Sîn*, along with *Bâ*', is potentially one of the longest chapters. (In some cases, like *dhal* [because of *dhikr*] or *ghayn* [because of *gham* and *ghazal*] the available vocabulary of words which begin with that letter is small enough to allow a thematic unity which shapes the essay; in others I feel licensed to impose the essay's theme by force of will.) For me the dominant concept of *Sîn*, at least in the short version, will be *safar*, voyaging and travel. Acknowledging that numerous *sîn* words suggest the opposite of travel—the stillness of *sajâda* or *sulta*, "authority," for instance, or Persian *sâzmân*, "institution"—we cite the name of Sindbad to link *sîn* with travel, as well as the episode of the idol in the *Sumnât* (a *sîn* city) which concludes Sa'dî's great epic poem the *Bûstân*. There are famous works of travel, in



the form of the *safar-nâma*, by Nâser-e Khosrow, Ibn Battûta, Ibn Fadlân (whose *Risâla* generated a 1976 novel by Michael Crichton called *Eaters of the Dead*), but I am going to focus on a series of travel notes by the 17th-century scholar Thomas Coryate who visited the court of Jahangir, left behind written fragments which circulated in the British press, and died on the road. In Surat.

From the introduction: If the alphabet could talk, what would it say to us? It spends so much time mute, transparent, attending passively to the meanings of the people who use it that we learn to ignore its presence. We learn to hear the sounds of the language as our eyes scan the page, to forget that without that visual intermediary those words wouldn't be sounding in our minds.

Like an unobtrusive servant noticed only by newcomers or by the children, there is always the possibility that there is some mumbling we had forgotten to listen to. The arts of calligraphy have evolved further, with more elegance and more imagination in the world of the Arabic alphabet than in Europe, so it may be that if we want to hear an alphabet speak clearly we will hear it best at the margins Arabic or Persian, Urdu, or Turkish in Ottoman times.

It is a topic and a genre which requires the indulgence of the organizers, but there are times when a project takes us over and this seems the presentation I'm programmed to offer.

Bibliography:

Beard, Michael. "Ghayn: Divagations on a Letter in Motion." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 21 (2001) Special issue: The Lyrical Phenomenon, 232-51.

Humez, Alexander & Nicholas. *Alpha to Omega: The Life and Times of the Greek Alphabet*. Boston: Godine,

\_\_\_\_\_. *ABC et Cetera: The Life and Times of the Roman Alphabet*. Boston: Godine, 1985.

Savinio, Alberto. *Nuova Enciclopedia*. Milan: Adelphi Edizioni, 1985. 3rd ed.

**Dr. Nergis Ertürk** (Binghamton University, SUNY),

"Translating into Ottoman" reconceptualizes the emergence of the novel in the Ottoman Turkish context. Challenging conventional narratives based on models of European literary influence, my paper emphasizes instead the emergence of Ottoman Turkish as a "telecommunications technology" in the second half of the nineteenth century. With the intensification of translational and print practices, language begins to function as an autonomous medium making accessible the unseen and the unheard of distant worlds – of both non-Turkish populations as well as of the outside world more generally. The early Ottoman Turkish novelists, I suggest, experienced this kind of omni-directional translatability of Ottoman Turkish as powerful linguistic liberation. Through a reading of a well-known early novel, *Müşahadat* [Eye-Witnessed Events, 1891] by journalist, novelist,



and publisher Ahmet Mithat Efendi, my paper argues that the emergence of the novel in the Ottoman Turkish literary context cannot be understood apart from its early enchantment with (as well as a fear of) this “freed” power of language and its revolutionary possibilities. At an overarching level, this new methodological emphasis on translational practices and new writing technologies accounts for the simultaneously entwined and disparate histories of the modern, suggesting alternatives to a model determined by relationships of originality and derivativeness.

**Sameh F. Hanna** (Andrew Mellon Fellow in Translation Studies, UCL, London)

*'Translation and nation: Translators' agency and the dictates of cultural production'*

Most writings on translation and nation have usually configured the relation between the two in terms of a conscious intellectual labour by a group (or groups) of translators who strive to appropriate foreign texts into cultural products (texts, stage scripts, film scripts, etc.) that inform and maintain a constructed image of the ‘nation’. Most of this research, which has a firm grounding in postcolonial studies with its foregrounding of human agency, endows translators with overestimated power and consciousness in their encounter with the cultural other. Fashioning the nation through translation is enacted, according to the discourse underlying this research, through a conscious deployment of a purportedly wilful agenda of ‘domestication’, to use the Venutian jargon.

This paper engages with these arguments, seeking to revisit the relation between translation and nation through a socio-cultural perspective made available by Bourdieu’s sociology of cultural production. In opposition to the linear relation between translation and nation, as promoted by postcolonialist approaches, the paper will problematize this relation with reference to the translations of Shakespeare’s dramatic work in Egypt. In studying the practices of Shakespeare translators in Egypt in the context of a postulated market of symbolic goods, this paper seeks to show that what have been allegedly seen as ‘nationalist’ elements in some of these translations are not only the outcome of conscious political agendas that the translators might have adopted. These elements are largely due to the dynamics of the cultural market for which the translations were produced. This paper ultimately aims at a balanced view that takes account of both the political agency of translators and the dictates of the field of cultural production within which they operated.

**Dr. Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar** (Boğaziçi University, Department of Translation and Interpreting Studies), *Translating the “Popular” in Early Republican Turkey*

Translation has had specific importance for the Ottoman/Modern Turkish societies in terms of the emergence of new literary genres or themes. An interesting aspect of the trajectory followed by literary translation in Turkey lies in the way it has conspicuously allied itself with political and ideological agendas. This alliance took many forms and became tangibly obvious in the 1940s with the setting up of the Translation Bureau. The massive translation movement launched by the Bureau demonstrated that translated works could serve as the



primary model for a new literary canon. Needless to mention, the idea of the establishment of a new literary canon for Turkey was a part and parcel of the nation-building efforts.

It would be unfair to claim that the close alliance of translation and nationalism/nation-building in Turkey became only crystallized in the activities of a state-sponsored institution. Translation was also used as a means of reinforcing and reproducing nationalist sentiments in a number of works published by private publishers which were not so political in their appearance. The paper will specifically explore the links between translation and nationalism as it reflected through translations of popular fiction published by Turkish private publishing companies in the 1930s and 1940s. Following a general critical survey of the activities of the Translation Bureau and private publishers until the end of the 1940s, it will present a case study composed of translations by Ali Rıza Seyfi, a translator and writer active in the 1930s and 1940s, who employed a number of strategies that served to reinforce the newly-established national identity in his translations of popular fiction from English. These strategies covered, among others, the choice of specific themes, characters and vocabulary.

The paper also includes a discussion of the different production and marketing strategies for popular literature in early Republican Turkey. The strategies used by translators of popular fiction, the prevalence of border-line cases such as pseudo-translations and concealed translations, the development and perpetuation of alternative modes of translation such as rewriting, the abundance of pseudonyms used by translators and writers of popular fiction are some issues which are taken up in the paper.

**Dr. Richard Jacquemond**, *Nation Building and Translation Policies in the Arab World*

**Dr. Erol Köroğlu** (Boğazici University, Fellow of 'Europe in the Middle East – The Middle East in Europe' 2006/7), *Lost in Nationalist Translation: Configurations, Appropriations and Translations of History in Adivar's 'The Shirt of Flame'*

This study aims to think about the oscillation of translation between salvage and loss in nationalist contexts. Paul Ricoeur emphasizes the inevitability of translation's oscillation, saying that "in translation ..., work is advanced with some salvaging and some acceptance of loss." (Ricoeur 3) Ricoeur, however, explains this process as a normal and positive one: "Bringing the reader to the author, bringing the author to the reader, at the risk of serving and betraying two masters: this is to practice what I like to call linguistic hospitality." (Ricoeur 23. Original emphasis) Yet, this approach becomes too optimistic in essentialist environments such as nationalism. Lawrence Venuti points out Derrida's depiction of nationalist thought as a circular logic: "The nation, imagined to be a homogeneous essence, must be constructed, but the construction is understood as a 'recourse, a re-source, a circular return to the source.'" (Venuti 178) Can we think of translation both as "a salvage and a loss" simultaneously in nationalist contexts? What is it lost in a nationalist translation in comparison to what is gained? Can we think of a translation for nationalist aims as a form of linguistic inhospitality or even abuse? What kind of information or understanding do we



obtain about the logic of nationalism(s) through such an inquiry? These questions will be discussed in this study through a comparative analysis of Halide Edib Adivar's *Atesten Gomlek* and its two translations into English.

Halide Edib Adivar (1885-1964) published her novel entitled *Atesten Gomlek* (Shirt of Fire), the founding text of the "Turkish Independence War novels" sub-genre in Turkish, in 1922. It was written before the end of the war and had a peculiarly idiosyncratic approach to the event. She depicted the era between 1918 and 1922 as a cataclysmic internal war, a revolution, and an anti-imperialist national liberation movement at the same time. The ambivalent signification of form and content in Adivar's novel made its influence on the subsequent examples of the sub-genre very problematic. Although this sub-genre has been alive since Adivar's novel and it served as an ideological pillar of nationalist thinking in different periods of Turkish republican history, most of the output in this sub-genre appropriated Adivar's model partially and chose to transform her approach into a more authoritarian, teleological, and epic one.

Halide Edib was a Turkish nationalist but her upbringing made her a liberal, hence a complicated nationalist. She learnt many languages (Turkish, English, French, Greek) as a daughter of a court translator and became a bilingual writer (Turkish and English) due to her education at an American college in Istanbul. As an example of this upbringing, she published her memoirs first in English and then in Turkish. On the other hand, she translated some of her own novels into English, e.g. *Atesten Gomlek* as *Shirt of Flame* in 1924. Surprisingly, her novel was re-translated into English and published in Lahore, India by a certain Maulvi Muhammad Yakub Han in the late 1930s. Both the title and long, descriptive subtitle of this re-translation are striking: "The Daughter of Smyrna: A Story of the Rise of Modern Turkey, on the Ashes of the Ottoman Empire—the Turk's Revolt against Western Domination, His Thrilling Adventures, Sufferings and Sacrifices in the Cause of National Honour and Independence". Furthermore, this re-translation included important and symptomatic omissions and alterations.

**Dr. Samia Mehrez** (American University in Cairo), *Translating Gender between the Local and the Global*

Despite the fact that both gender and translation are basic to our collective human existence, our attempts to understand and theorize the processes that shape them are quite recent. Gender studies and translation studies are both fairly new fields with international and interdisciplinary thrusts and implications. In both instances they have oriented themselves toward traveling across traditional academic disciplines to create transnational communities and cross-cultural communication. This paper uses theoretical tools from the field of translation studies in order to understand some of the challenges that face us in translating terms and concepts involved in gender studies focusing specifically on the developing field of gender studies in Egypt, whose primary responsibility in the local context is to elaborate, develop, and disseminate translations of gender that enable agency. The paper also explores



some of the sites of resistance to the field in Egypt and in the Arab world, including various Islamist discourses.

**Dr. Anwar Moghith**, *La préoccupation politique et la réception des la pensée européenne dans le monde arabe Le cas de Derrida*

La traduction moderne vers l'arabe avait toujours une visée politique. Dès l'aube de la traduction moderne, Tahtawi a fixé pour ses traductions un objectif de réforme sociale, et plus largement une contribution dans un projet de la Nahda. Cette tâche représente une sorte de paradigme pour toute traduction qui suit. La plus part des préfaces des traducteurs arabes reflètent ce souci.

Cet objectif ne se limite pas à la traduction mais il domine aussi toute la réception des courants philosophiques occidentaux dans le monde arabe. Non seulement les libéraux et les marxistes mais aussi les darwinistes, les positivistes et les existentialistes déploient cette approche politique qui a été amplifiée par le contexte de libération nationale et de décolonisation. La lecture politique des textes philosophiques a été popularisée par l'adoption du marxisme, dans sa forme stalinienne, par une partie dynamique et influente des jeunes intellectuels.

La traduction et la réception de l'œuvre de Jacques Derrida ont été soumises au même paradigme. Dans notre communication nous analysons le débat, dominé par approche, entre Derrida, en personne, et les intellectuels égyptiens au Caire en 2000. Impérialisme, eurocentrisme, conflit israélo-arabe, mondialisation, révolution... sont les thèmes majeurs de ce débat. La pensée de Derrida, dans laquelle la préoccupation politique est au centre, ne fait que souligner cette approche. En effet, la déconstruction chez Derrida fonctionne toujours par une lecture d'un texte ; et cette lecture est très chargée des soucis et des visés politiques. La différence entre deux lectures politiques des textes philosophiques est-elle significative. Et la différence, comme partie structurelle de chaque réception, peut-elle aider à changer notre manière de voir, de recevoir et de concevoir. Nous nous interrogeons donc sur la légitimité et les limites de ce cadre politique de la traduction en particulier, et de la lecture des textes philosophiques en générale à partir de la réflexion derridienne.

**Dr. Oded Schechter**, *Translation as secular-national project: the case of Spinoza and Zionism.*

Translation has been understood in recent decades as a process and a project that can overcome differences, representing the possibility of constructing bridges between different "cultures." In this lecture I will suggest that translation should be differently understood. Translation can be a source of a *common difference* which accompanies the affirmation of nationality. This lecture concentrates on the translation of Spinoza into the Hebrew. In particular I will discuss how a contemporary translation is used to reaffirm a kind of secular nationalism.



**Dr. Sunil Sharma** (Boston University), *Acts of Love: Azad Bilgrami (d. 1785) on Poetic Synthesis and Cultural Translation*

In the longue durée of Persianate literary history the major instances of translation projects of texts into Persian were deliberate acts of seeking knowledge in order to either empower the translator intellectually or to serve the ends of empire building. The legend of the Kalila wa Dimna's transformation into a core Perso-Islamic text, the scientific labours of Abu Raihan al-Biruni in attempting to comprehend Hindu knowledge systems on behalf of the Ghaznavids, the translation bureau at the Mughal court are all moments when Iranian or Persianate empires were at their peak. There are other such examples of pre-modern Persianate historical junctures where a complex degree of interface between cultures leads to acts of literary translation, but these can also overwhelm the individual effort. This paper will examine the figure of Azad Bilgrami (d. 1785) who was the first Persian author to synthesize Persian, Arabic and Indian poetics, combining the purely theoretical interest of a scholar with a practicing poet's insight into the workings of the various traditions he was immersed in. In his Arabic work, *Subhat al-marjan fi athar Hindustan* (Coral Rosary of Indian Antiquities) written in 1763-64, Azad Bilgrami compared the rhetorics of Arabic and Sanskrit love poetry in an effort to effect a form of cultural accommodation that would not be devoid of aesthetic pleasure. A year later he Persianized (tafris) the first two sections of his Arabic work, that appeared as the *Ghazalan-e Hind* (Female Beloveds of India). This work displaces the monolithic view of an Islamic poetics of the love lyric by treating Arabic and Persian as independent literary cultures, albeit from an Indo-Muslim point of view. Interestingly Azad Bilgrami's work is located in between two major empires—Mughal and British colonial—that valued translation as an indispensable political tool. Is such a work then merely a literary and cultural aberration or does it point to a nascent national consciousness that is multicultural and multilingual?

**Dr. Shaden M. Tageldin** (Assistant Professor, Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature, University of Minnesota • Fellow, Europe in the Middle East—The Middle East in Europe)

*The Idea of Order at Cairo: Nation-Formation and the Imperial Urge toward Translatability*

Translation was not just the prime vehicle through which early-twentieth-century Egyptian intellectuals assimilated European literature and thought into Egypt, but also the trope some of those intellectuals used to describe both the failed and the desired Egyptian nation. Writing in 1928, the Egyptian writer and literary critic Muhammad Haykal—author of what is usually called the first Arabic novel (*Zaynab*, 1913) and editor-in-chief of the major newspaper *al-Siyasa*—compared 1920s Egypt to the Tower of Babel, arguing that the nation's chaotic mix of secularist versus Azharite intellectual tendencies, languages, and even modes of dress had plunged Egypt into a state of mutual intranational untranslatability: a state that, if left unchecked, ultimately would undercut the efforts of European-educated Egyptians to “culture” the minds of their compatriots back home and to foster “freedom of thought” and expression among them. That same year, the Egyptian academic and literary critic Ahmad Hasan Al-Zayyat (who later would become editor-in-chief of the periodical *al-*



*Risala*) named Arabic literature a prime locus of Egypt's cultural confusion, calling its state "chaos," its boundaries and rules undefined. In this paper, I argue that such writings suggest that Egypt would not become "orderly" and take its place among "civilized" (European) nations until its culture had changed from one in which nothing was translatable into one in which everything was translatable, everything commensurable. What, I ask, is lost in this urge to erase incommensurability? How is that drive linked to European empire's push to impose its particularity as universal? And how does Egyptian nationalist surrender to that drive attest to what I call the imperial "seduction of translation"?

**Dr. Mona Tolba** (Université Charles De Gaulle, Lille 3), *Les problèmes linguistiques de la réception de la traduction de Derrida en Egypte*

Cette recherche s'intéresse à la réception de Derrida en Egypte qui ne se limite pas à ses oeuvres traduites en arabe - déjà pas nombreux - mais s'étend à tout le courant philosophique que représente "La Déconstruction" et qui est désormais introduit au monde arabe à travers des comptes rendus ou des expositions simplistes et réductrices de la philosophie de Derrida, et par l'intermédiaire d'une autre langue et un autre exploit de cette philosophie auprès des partisans de Derrida aux Etats Unis ou en Angleterre comme Paul de Man, Hillis Miller et Christopher Norris dont les oeuvres sont écrites en anglais : langue plus familière que le français pour les Egyptiens.

On est confronté ainsi à des difficultés de réorientation des idées de Derrida: Premièrement au niveau de la traduction: par exemple le terme de déconstruction traduit généralement en arabe par *tafkik* va traîner - d'entrée de jeu- toute cette philosophie vers un champ sémantique qui n'est au fond que celui du terme *tafkik* en langue arabe et ses sens négatives: dissociation, disjonction, dislocation, effritement...etc. La traduction ne pouvant- en cherchant l'équivalent d'un mot- transporter tout son histoire sémantique dans la langue d'origine vers la langue cible, pourra indirectement infecter le sens. Le mot « déconstruction » dans les langues latines a joui d'effets sémantiques positifs avec la philosophie de Heidegger, ainsi que ses synonymes de sens tel que rupture reconstructive chez Nietzsche et les philosophes de lumières. Ce qui échappe à un lecteur arabe non averti. On verra bien les conséquences conceptuelles qui en découlent de cette difficulté linguistique dans l'oeuvre d'un des grands intellectuels Egyptiens, Abdel Wahab El Mesiri et son usage du mot *tafkik* dans son livre "La Laïcité partielle et intégrale".

La réception de Derrida par l'intermédiaire de la langue et la culture Anglo- américaine va à son tour marquer sa réception et l'orienter vers le domaine littéraire principalement, ce qui n'était pas -comme je tente de le démontrer dans cette présentation- l'enjeu primordial de Derrida dans ses oeuvres, mais qui était plutôt l'effet de sa réception aux Etats Unis. On analysera dans ce sens la première thèse de maîtrise de Hossam Nael (anglophone) présentée à l'université du Caire et qui fait usage de la philosophie Derridienne pour analyser l'oeuvre littéraire d'Edward El Kharat (grand romancier Egyptien).



Ces effets linguistiques de la réception de Derrida en Egypte sont- en outre -influencés par un contexte sociopolitique mondiale et local, comme on essaiera de le découvrir a travers ce débat déchirant entre Gaber Assfour et Abdel Aziz Hamouda, faisant de Derrida le bouc émissaire de leur propres conflits et choix politico- culturels. (*Akhbar al adab*, Fevrier 1998). Le mot *tafkik* prendra chez ce dernier le sens de l'effritement et la destruction de la culture arabo-musulmane. Cet usage national de la déconstruction fera l'objet de notre analyse de l'oeuvre de Hamouda "Les miroirs convexes». Et je me permets ici et dans ce cadre d'analyser aussi l'attaque offensive de Abdel Hakim Badran contre moi étant un traître puisque je présente et je traduis l'oeuvre de Derrida! (Soutour: Juin Juillet 2000).

Une fois que l'oeuvre intégral "De la grammatologie" de Derrida est traduit en arabe et édité en 2005 il ne suscita aucun débat philosophique sérieux, jusqu'aux nos jours. Etant déjà prisonnier d'un champ sémantique et linguistique, sa lecture objective ou même curieuse parait désavouable ou au moins embarrassante. D'autant plus que le style complexe de l'écriture philosophique occidentale parait de plus en plus difficile à assimiler a travers un style équivoque en une langue arabe qui perd de jour en jour ses terrains!!!

(Lille, 15 Mars 2007)