

Riham Debian

## Domesticating the Islamic in/of the Middle East: Theo-Ego-Dynamics of Metropolitan Translation and the Geo-Politics of Paratranslation

---

1/2021

DOI: 10.25365/cts-2021-3-1-5

Herausgegeben am / Éditée au /  
Edited at the: Zentrum für  
Translationswissenschaft der  
Universität Wien

ISSN: 2617-3441

### Abstract

*This paper tackles the problematics of domesticating the Islamic identity-strand of the Arab Middle East in metropolitan translation in post-Arab Spring Egypt. The researcher particularly engages with the changing politics of cultural translation (from Arabic into English) and their ramification with respect to the changing parameters of both the top-level process of cultural representation of the non-Western Other, and the production conditions enabling the transposition of Ibrahim Essa's مولانا [Maulana] (ESSA 2012) into its English translation The Televangelist (2016) by the Journalist-turned literary translator, Jonathan Wright. Written by the Egyptian journalist-writer, Ibrahim Essa, the novel signals the journalistic entry into Arabic literary production and patronage nuanced by the changing cultural politics of the post-revolutionary context. The novel fictively dramatizes the Egyptian Muslim preacher movement—what has been academically codified in terms of politics of piety and 'satellite piety' (MAHMOOD 2005; ABOU BAKR 2013) – and the movement's enmeshment in the new media technology, power-politics, and the changing political and social identity of contemporary Egypt. The English translation The Televangelist (2016) augurs a similar turn in the production and promotion of Arabic literature in translation marked by the journalistic identity of the translator and the new American University of Cairo Press imprint (AUCP), Hoopoe Fiction (2016), through which the translation (debut production) is launched and promoted. The research aims to address the question of the political impact of carving a niche market for a transfigured cultural politics for the Arab Middle East through the new AUC imprint, Hoopoe Fiction, and its implication for both the politically induced cultural branding of the New Middle East and the interfaith agenda of global governance. This is done through instrumentalizing 'translation from the margin' and 'marginal translation' (YUSTE FRÍAS 2012, 2015) to enable the decolonizing of Euro-centric parameters of translation studies and thence the decoding of the political instrumentalization of translation geo-historical location in the global matrix of power and forthcoming imperial designs.*

Keywords: Paratext, Paratranslation, Satellite Piety, Epistemic Disobedience, Marginal/Metropolitan translation

---

Zum Zitieren des Artikels / Pour citer l'article / To cite the article:

Debian, Riham (2021): Domesticating the Islamic in/of the Middle East: Theo-Ego-Dynamics of Metropolitan Translation and the Geo-Politics of Paratranslation, *Chronotopos* 3 (1), 75-98. DOI: 10.25365/cts-2021-3-1-5



Riham Debian

## Domesticating the Islamic in/of the Middle East: Theo-Ego-Dynamics of Metropolitan Translation and Geo- Body Politics of Paratranslation

### Abstract

*This paper tackles the problematics of domesticating the Islamic identity-strand of the Arab Middle East in metropolitan translation in post-Arab Spring Egypt. The researcher particularly engages with the changing politics of cultural translation (from Arabic into English) and their ramification with respect to the changing parameters of both the top-level process of cultural representation of the non-Western Other, and the production conditions enabling the transposition of Ibrahim Essa's مولانا [Maulana] (ESSA 2012) into its English translation *The Televangelist* (2016) by the Journalist-turned literary translator, Jonathan Wright. Written by the Egyptian journalist-writer, Ibrahim Essa, the novel signals the journalistic entry into Arabic literary production and patronage nuanced by the changing cultural politics of the post-revolutionary context. The novel fictively dramatizes the Egyptian Muslim preacher movement—what has been academically codified in terms of politics of piety and 'satellite piety' (MAHMOOD 2005; ABOU BAKR 2013) – and the movement's enmeshment in the new media technology, power-politics, and the changing political and social identity of contemporary Egypt. The English translation *The Televangelist* (2016) augurs a similar turn in the production and promotion of Arabic literature in translation marked by the journalistic identity of the translator and the new American University of Cairo Press imprint (AUCP), *Hoopoe Fiction* (2016), through which the translation (debut production) is launched and promoted. The research aims to address the question of the political impact of carving a niche market for a transfigured cultural politics for the Arab Middle East through the new AUC imprint, *Hoopoe Fiction*, and its implication for both the politically induced cultural branding of the New Middle East and the interfaith agenda of global governance. This is done through instrumentalizing 'translation from the margin' and 'marginal translation' (YUSTE FRÍAS 2012, 2015) to enable the decolonizing of Euro-centric parameters of translation studies and thence the decoding of the political instrumentalization of translation geo-historical location in the global matrix of power and forthcoming imperial designs.*

*Keywords: Paratext, Paratranslation, Satellite Piety, Epistemic Disobedience, Marginal/ Metropolitan translation*

## 1. Introduction

Post-colonial eco-criticism is a way of thinking that seeks to understand how top-level, elite driven processes like (neo) colonialism, capitalism, international development, interstate alliance or the centralization or devolution of power are connected to the spaces in which people live and act [...] It consciously understands 'spaces' as broadly as possible, taking into account both the *physical and metaphysical* spaces with which humans interact (NELSON 2015).

Coming late to border thinking (2010)<sup>1</sup>, post-colonial eco-criticism inflects the bio-centricism of the deep ecological strain of eco-criticism and nuances the anti-capitalist intervention of social ecological critical perspective with socio-political and cultural dimensions. This inflection shifts the focus of eco-critical discussions onto analysis of the impact of elite driven structural process on the spaces in which people live and act. This shift in focus alternately blurs the borders between the physical/metaphysical, geo-historical location/epistemology, aesthetics/politics and margin/center, widens the conceptual framework of eco-criticism, and aligns its parameter with border

---

<sup>1</sup>In 2004, there was a much-welcomed dialogue between post-colonialism and eco-criticism with critics applauding the cross-pollination of the two schools, specifically due to the beneficial correctional potential of their integration. The argument was that the cross-pollination of the two lines of thinking would interjects the parochialism, local/national and regional focus of eco-criticism (especially in its North American Jeffersonian agrarian version) with cross-national and power-politics modalities of post-colonialism. Post-colonialism would be similarly configured by the habitat/habitation debates of the place-centric ecological debates. Indeed, despite the convergence of social ecological strain with the early anti-colonialist thinking, post-colonialism has forsaken the environmentally driven ethos of anti-colonialist debates towards the terrain of textuality and intertextuality framing post-colonial struggle in terms of discursive struggle for identity formation. This line of thinking was adopted by the first generation of post-colonial critics (Said, Spivak, Bhabha). Their engagement with the material condition of colonialism was not fully developed—Said articulated the idea of geography as an epicenter of post-colonial identity only to forsake it in preference of representation. Spivak posits understanding of geo-political coordinates of European universal subject. The disciplinary relation between post-colonialism and eco-criticism was codified in the second edition of *the Post-colonial Studies Reader* (2006), where Ashcroft instrumentalizes the key vocabulary of social ecological concern (habitat, habituation, horizontal, place) in post-colonial understanding of human culture. However, the organizational scheme of the book as much as the philosophical division of the chapters was tarnished by Western epistemological outlook regarding the division between human and non-human culture and the ambivalence to the legacy of progress and nature conservation. The epistemic privilege was accorded to European knowledge schema with disregard to the indigenous population view on the oneness between man and nature prior to the advent of colonialism (MUKHERJEE 2010). This marginalization or rather forsaking of the social ecological thrust of anti-colonialist theorist and deep entrenched epistemic privilege granted to Western epistemology (reflexive of the privilege of the mobile cosmopolitan elite of the global south of which the majority of post-colonial theorists are a part) remains an obstacle deterring the full engagement of post-colonial criticism in critical border thinking. The latter engages with radical critique of the epistemic borders of European knowledge to decolonize knowledge and practice. The manifestation of that engagement with the border epistemology was furnished in *Post-colonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animal and Environment* (MUKHERJEE 2010).

thinking. Unlike post-colonialism, critical border thinking implements what Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006) qualify in terms of *de-colonial epistemic shift* through conceptual engagement with the interface between geo-historical location and the epistemology of knowledge production. The target is to release what Mignolo and Tlostanova formulates in terms of “a geo- and body-politically oriented” framework capacitated to unpack “the theo- and ego-politics that sustained and continues to sustain, the global imperial designs” (MIGNOLO & TLOSTANOVA 2006: 218).<sup>2</sup>

Adopting Mignolo’s take and political stance, I conduct an act of *epistemic disobedience* (2013) through engaging with the theo- and ego-politics embedded in the translation of مولانا [Maulana] (ESSA 2012) into *The Televangelist* (ESSA / WRIGHT 2016). The aim is to implement a de-colonial epistemic shift through examining the metropolitan translation from the margin of translation theories, and within the post-colonial eco-critical parameters of international relations (NELSON 2015). As part of the top-level, elite-driven processes, cultural translation poses as a site for the play of the hierarchal binarism of international relations and the ego-theo-politics of global coloniality (MIGNOLO & TLOSTANOVA 2006), especially with respect to the Islamic axis of Arab Middle East. The latter’s contemporary translation into English is the current arena for both cultural accommodation along the theo-geo-epistemic privilege of Western metaphysics<sup>3</sup> (MIGNOLO & TLOSTANOVA 2006), and metropolitan co-optation of difference in line with the global agenda for inter-faith-based world governance—fashioned after the Christian expansionist model. I therefore investigate the translational eco-system informing the transposition of مولانا [Maulana] (ESSA 2012) into *The Televangelist* (ESSA / WRIGHT 2016) and the ecologies of the translation choice production and transmission. Translation is approached as interconnected complex systems of communication. The translators are positioned amid this complex system

---

<sup>2</sup>In his engagement with subaltern studies, Mignolo (2009) distinguishes between the conceptual framework emanating from the North and the critical categories emanating from the southern project (Latin American) to qualify the decolonizing thrust of critical border thinking.

<sup>3</sup>Countering the ego-theo-politics of Western frontier epistemology, Mignolo proposes the implementation of de-colonial epistemic shift through the category of *geo- and body politics of knowledge*. Geo- and body-politics constitute a counter-hegemonic category in critical border thinking that seeks to supplant and hence decolonize the theo-ego-politics of knowledge of imperial/colonial epistemic difference with its attendant conception of universality through “shifting the geography of reason to geo- and body politics of knowledge” away from the “theological and ego-logical principles” of imperial territorial epistemology (MIGNOLO & TLOSTANOVA 2006: 210). The end is “a de-colonial move”— “not reduced to an abstract universal (e.g. critical theory, semiotics of culture, or nomadology for everyone on the planet)” (MIGNOLO & TLOSTANOVA 2006: 210). The move is towards ‘pluri-versality’ from the perspectives of border thinking i.e. decolonization of the imperial epistemic differences embedded in Anglo-American domination of theoretical production. Mignolo rejects the term alternative modernity in preference to the plur-versality of plural ‘global modernities’ aware of and interjecting with the legacies of ‘global colonialities’ (MIGNOLO 2009: 39). In short, the geo-body politics of knowledge production is designed to ensure pluri-versality through critical attention to the historical location of knowledge production and reception, and the critical engagement with question of the epistemic ranks of languages and privileges of Western and globalized culture of knowledge production.

and are entrusted to process and produce a verbal choice in line with the professional practice, publishers' policies, marketing strategies and the asymmetrical power-relations informing the semiotic structure of intercultural signification. This approach center stages what has been currently theorized as the remit of the margin of translation and Translation Studies (TS). I utilize the Spanish Vigo University Translation & Para-translation Research Group's intervention in the yet undertow sociological turn in translation and their instrumentalization of *para-translation* as a site for "intercultural ideological mediation" (CASTRO 2009: 2) through "the aesthetic, political, cultural and social manipulation in the para-text" (YUSTE FRÍAS 2012: 119). This is done through an engagement with the compatibility of Wright's titular framing with the iconographic packaging of the translated text (book cover and the publisher's imprint). I particularly examine the implication of both the titular framing and iconographic packaging for a niche market for a transfigured cultural politics, and the ideological co-optation of the Islamic preaching movement in Egypt—outside the piety parameter of Mahmood (2005) and Abou Bakr (2013). I argue for the following. First is the theo-ego logic of the translational titular framing of *مولانا* [Maulana] (ESSA 2012), which fashions the Islamic piety movement in Egypt along the Anglo-American evangelist model and cultural politics<sup>4</sup>. Second is the frontier epistemology and Orientalizing imagery informing the iconographic symbolism of the Hoopoe Fiction imprint and its semiotic synchronization with the translational titular framing, especially with respect to the initiation of a new cultural politics for cultural branding of the *New Middle East* through interfaith dialogue agenda.<sup>5</sup> Hoopoe Fiction is a new imprint for AUC Press, launched in 2016 (*The Televangelist* is the first publication) targeting "bookworms of historical fiction set in far-flung lands, thriller lovers with a taste for intrigue, and crime fanatics who crave Noir" (<https://hoopoefiction.com/about/>). Third is the political

---

<sup>4</sup> "Televangelism" refers to the specific style of religious broadcasting identified with conservative Protestantism and the Religious Right. Its roots are in the fundamentalist radio ministries of the 1930s through the 1950s, but televangelists took advantage of changing Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations, the increasing availability of cable television, and a changing cultural climate to build vast media empires, most significantly in the 1980s. Billy Graham became known worldwide through his TV specials from the 1950s on. Other prominent televangelists have included Oral Roberts, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson (Encyclopedia.com, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/united-states-and-canada/us-history/televangelism>, accessed April 2021).

<sup>5</sup> In 2008, during the celebration of the State of Israel sixtieth anniversary, in a national bird contest organized by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, the Hoopoe was declared the national bird of Israel by a nationwide vote—despite "not [being] kosher or particularly hygienic, but it is fit for a king." In Hebrew scripture and Judo-Christian tradition, the hoopoe is symbol of the frontier propelled by the act of telling of distant geographies into stories. Its launch in the contemporary translation market aims at inaugurating a priming effect for a new cultural politics that combine the three religions. This is particularly evident in light of Hoopoe's semantic function within the religious scheme of monotheistic faiths, the imperial territorial epistemology of theo-ego-politics of knowledge production, and its contemporary geo-political semiotation in contemporary Middle Eastern national cultural politics.

implication of the AUC Press' monopoly of English translation market in Egypt and the Arab World, and the changing praxis of Western forensic interest in Middle Eastern cultural politics. This is particularly pertinent to the issue of the changing cultural politics of literary and translation production and their orientation towards Journalist-turned writer of Source text (ST) and Journalist-turned literary translator of the Target Text (TT). Fourth, on the methodological level, I argue for the materiality of communication in postmodern cultural production<sup>6</sup> through attention to the primacy of the para-text (in its dual formulations of the peri-text and epi-text<sup>7</sup>—also termed extra-text) as an entry point to interpretation and transmission. I attempt to call attention to the para-text as a discursive site and analytical tool for decoding the power-politics of translation, especially with respect to the asymmetrical power relations of translation directionality and publishing market industry of English translation of the Arab World. Ultimately, I argue for instrumentalization of translation from the margin (marginal translation) as a de-colonizing theoretical parameter in TS, specifically with respect to reading the power-politics of the metropolitan translation production. The latter brought forth Hoopoe fiction, whose debut translation production is the transfiguration of مولانا [Maulana] (ESSA 2012) into *The Televangelist* (ESSA / WRIGHT 2016) by a Journalist-turned literary translation and Arabist.

---

<sup>6</sup> In Translation Studies, there is a burgeoning rise of the cultural-attuned-turn to the materiality of communication in the postmodern (LITTAU 1997, 2011, 2016). Not yet a developed model of analysis, Littau's take on the materiality of communication in electronic mediated transfer is significant for its calling attention to the multi-semiotic structure of signification propelled by digital media. Hence, this turn singles the primacy of the media, not as form, rather as regulating technology for communication and signification. See Littau's take on the materiality of communication (1996, 2011, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Though not fully defined within the parameters of the Vigo school, extra-text, para-text and inter-text figure as the attendant conception of para-translation, especially in light of their pursuit of epistemological widening of the functionality of para-text beyond translation framing. Yuste Frías (2016) argues against defining para-translation exclusively as a term referring to the study of the translation of para-texts. He proposes the two categories of the epi-text and peri-text. Concurring with what Mehrez (1994) terms as the extra-text, defined as the "history of the text", background information (MEHREZ 1994: 39), the epi-text of the Vigo school assumes the functionality of the extra-text, particularly due to its instrumentalization to read the socio-cultural contexts enabling the text production and reception. Para-text is defined as "particular sets of verbal and iconic units, icono-textual entities or material productions" (YUSTE FRÍAS 2013). Inter-text is defined in Littau's postmodern scheme as "a trace of other texts [...] translation of other texts." (LITTAU 1997) and the structures of signification enabling meaning mediation operative on two levels: first, the local micro-level of word in both the linguistic (verbal) and iconic (image) modes; second, global macro-level pertaining to the macro-literary conventions of the translated genre. According to Batchelor (2018), Tahir-Gürçağlar's (2002) article offers a much clearer indication of the distinctions between *para-text* and *extra-text*, including an explanation of the differences between *epi-text* and *extra-text*. Both terms denote material unattached to the text itself. For Tahir-Gürçağlar', *extratexts* also reference "the general meta-discourse on translation circulating independently of individual translated texts" (cited in BATCHELOR 2018).

## 2. The Margin of Anglophone Translation Studies:

### **Vigo School Para-Translation/Textuality and the Critical Border of Interpretation/Communication**

Located outside Anglo-American context, the School of Philology and Translation of the University of Vigo in Spain took lead from deconstruction and French critical theories' take on textual transcendence and para-textuality (GENETTE 1997) to create the concept of para-translation. The prime objective of the term coinage was to devise a critical category capable of analyzing what Yuste Frías formulates in terms of “the activities that are present at the threshold of translation” and communication through attention to the textual practices that surround, wrap, and introduce the TT to reception (YUSTE FRÍAS 2012: 119). According to Yuste Frías (2012), these activities elucidate the role of power relations, social and institutional contexts, the ideologies defining the positioning of para-/translators' subjectivities and the materiality of translation production. For that end, the Translation & Para-translation Research Group (T&P) at the University of Vigo was established in 2005 and a start-up homonymous MA degree program was launched with the agenda of expanding the conceptual parameter of the para-text and formulating the theoretical praxis of para-translation. Their focus was the materiality of communication and the function-based criterion of the para-texts. The latter lie at threshold of interpretation (GENETTE 1997) and enable the texts' presence in the physical world, their reception and communication to their designated readership. Transposing Genette's dictum<sup>8</sup> on the functionality of the para-text for the physicality of book presence onto translation studies, the theoretical formulation of para-translation premises the existence of TT on para-translational activities and para-textual production. Yuste Frías, the T&P member with the largest number of publications according to Batchelor (2018), formulates his argument for para-translation in the following terms:

*“[T]exts do not exist by themselves. Rather, for their presence to be a reality in the publishing world, they are ever dependent on para-texts [...] there cannot be a reading situation without an appropriate showcasing of the text by its publishers using different*

---

<sup>8</sup> According to Genette, a para-text is “what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers” (1997: 1). As enabling structure to textual materiality and access, this formulation of the para-text posits the non-existence of the text without a para-text, whose production is not the author of the text rather those involved and contributing to the composition of the final product that the reader access. Hence, understanding of the para-text engages with the myriad contexts (social, institutional, corporate) that brought about the text in a book format and brought forth the scheme of its reception and interpretation. Thus, for Genette (1997), the para-text does not just involve the physical aspects surrounding the text (book cover, book blurb, title, subtitle, intertitles, prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, marginal, infrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations). It also includes “many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic [from a third party] or autographic [from the author]” (Genette 1997: 1). This expansive parameter of the para-text extends its scope to what Genette formulates in terms of the peri and epi-text. The latter defined as “the distanced elements [...] located outside the book” (5) and contrasting with the peritext, which is physically attached to the text.

*para-textual productions [...] there can be no text without para-text, neither can there be translation without corresponding para-translation.*” (YUSTE FRÍAS 2012: 118)

According to Batchelor (2018), Yuste Frías’ interconnected formulation of text/para-text, and translation/para-translation focuses the study of translation on the study para-textual elements with aim of taking into account the analysis of the “ideological considerations and historical perspectives [...] for the translation of multi-semiotic texts” (BATCHELOR 2018: 152). Moreover, the projected trajectory of Yuste Frías’ formulation is an ethical translational practice attuned to the multi-semiotic textual encoding of postmodern cultural production. The latter’s socio-cultural and ideological subtexts covertly subsume the ST, TT, and their multifarious producers and consumers within the cultural politics of global design through the semiotic codes accompanying and representing the text. As Yuste Frías states:

*“Para-translation invites the translator – translating subjects and first para-translating agents – to read, interpret and para-translate any kind of semiotic code surrounding, wrapping, accompanying, extending, introducing and presenting the text at the margins and on the thresholds of translation: ‘au seuil de la traduction’.*” (YUSTE FRÍAS 2012: 119)

As an ethical translational training program, the Vigo University T&P Research Group created the new term of para-translation with the intention of designing “a paradigmatic area suitable for an authentic renovation of the everlasting quandary between university theory and professional practice ... [and] an epistemological opening” into postmodern power-communication-politics (YUSTE FRÍAS 2015: 317). This venture into an epistemological opening—encompassing and yet not limited to “a predetermined frame such as the para-texts” (YUSTE FRÍAS 2015: 37) – renders para-translation an epistemic theoretical shift attuned to the conceptual construction of text in the digital age of automated translation. Thence, it is apt to furnish a paradigm for TS in the margin – beyond the euro-centric epistemology of the post-colony.

### ***2.1. Para-translation Geo-Body Politics: Para-text and the Geo-Historical Location of Postmodern Transfer***

Despite their critique for venturing into the sociological turn (PYM 2011) and their rare employment in Anglophone Translation Studies (BATCHELOR 2018), the theoretical input of the members of the T&P research group attests to their critical border positionality that engages with the geo-historical location and epistemology of knowledge production through the venture into a dual taxonomy of para-texts. This dual taxonomy, borrowed from Genette’s framework (1997), identifies two levels of the para-text: the peri-text and epi-text. The peri-text is “an essentially spatial and material category” that includes “the titles, subtitles, intertitles, the prologue and epilogue, the notes, dedication, adverts, and glossaries and all the nonverbal graphic aspect such as font size” (GARRIDO 2011: 69). The epi-text is defined as “those messages that are situated around the text, but at a certain distance [...] usually found outside



the work” (GARRIDO 2011: 70). These include the group of discourses that are not pertinent to presenting and commenting on the text (extra-text) and the background information related to textual interpretation. The epi-text also includes promotional material in newspaper and magazines, interviews with the author or translation, commentary, criticism, reviews and the various adaptations—designed with the functionality of framing and promoting the work to a designated audience. Together, the peri- and epi-text furnish what Yuste Frías (2015) and Garrido (2011) respectively articulates in terms of “the spatio-temporal area (virtual or physical) occupied by the translators” (YUSTE FRÍAS 2015: 22), and the “two spaces for the analysis of the exclusive ideological function” of the para-texts (GARRIDO 2011: 71). This exclusive ideological function of the para-text is the study object of para-translation, which (against Pym’s critique for venturing into the sociological) signals its innovative reception praxis on translation and ideology. The latter is furnished through the term para-translation as a descriptive concept for what Garrido (2011) formulates in terms of “the intentional cognitive processes (ideological form and construction) behind the mechanism of cultural transfer” between postmodern societies (GARRIDO 2011: 67). Thus, as a descriptive and analytical category, the term para-translation figures as an absolution account for the translators’ full responsibilities for the ideological packaging of the para-texts. Garrido (2011) postulates “the concept of *para-translation* to become the center of knowledge of the human being, of the languages and cultures in our modernity”, specifically because of its aptitude to explain the covert cognitive mechanism of calculated cultural interpretation that occurs when:

*“[A] society, in accordance with its beliefs and values, decides how (and when and why) to incorporate a foreign item in its cultural heritage, and to this end, it appoints certain intermediaries, the editors who watches over its interest and who [are] [...] referred to as paratranslators.”* (GARRIDO 2011: 65, 67)

In other words, the term translation in T&P research scheme is reserved for “the mechanism of verbal transference or for when the transfer is strictly (inter)linguistic, although here too there can be para-translation” (GARRIDO 2011: 65). Para-translation ventures into decoding the sociological overture of the TT (located in the para-texts) through attention to the conditioning role of the historical perspectives in ideology interpretation and communication (GARRIDO 2011). The para-texts, in its dual analytical spaces of the peri- and epi-text, figure as an encryption site for complex processes of socio-cognitive negotiations located at the border of the TT and decoded through the encoded relation between the geo-historical location of the translator and the geo-body-politics of the *translates*.<sup>9</sup> At the end of the day, it is the epi-text (outside

---

<sup>9</sup> *Translatese* is a postcolonial term devised by Spivak (1993 [2004]) to designate the inappropriate cultural translation practices of Third World literature that appropriate and over-assimilate Third World subjects according to the marketing expectation of Anglo-American publishing industry. In its transposition to TS, the term is instrumentalized to reference the appropriation and co-optation textual strategies that result from the asymmetrical power-relations between the Source Language

the textual premises) that provides for what Garrido (2011) specifies in terms of the historical perspective. This historical perspective paradoxically conditions and elucidates the tacit process of ideological transmission (posited as the third code) of the imperial frontier territorial epistemology underwriting Western knowledge production on the Third World, and cultural production of the translatee—Spivak’s (1993 [2004]) domesticated and stereotyped cultural Other.

### 3. Extra-/Epi-text:

#### **Western Knowledge Production and the Epistemic Frontier of Translational Global Designs**

According to Mignolo (2006), the epistemic privilege of Western Knowledge production stems from the epistemological frontier logic. The territorial-based logic of frontier epistemology sets global modernity in motion through a matrix of epistemic differences and ranks. These matrixes constituted the driving force for colonial mapping, classification, translation and signification of the normative Western Self and its doppelgänger Other in the colonial era. The matrix-subtext was the “theology and the theo-politics of knowledge” in the Middle Ages, which has been displaced by the Enlightenment “secular ego-logy and the ego-politics of knowledge”, bringing forth the theo-ego-politics of knowledge production of global modernity (MIGNOLO & TLOSTANOVA: 206). Global modernity is predicated on “zero-point epistemology” (MIGNOLO & TLOSTANOVA 2006: 209). The latter sets the epistemic privilege of Western knowledge through both “the epistemic privilege of the humanities and the social sciences – the privilege of an observer that makes the rest of the world an object of observation (from Orientalism to Area Studies)”, and their presumptuous claim to the geo-historical and epistemological emptiness of the other cultures (MIGNOLO & TLOSTANOVA 2006: 206). The epistemic frontier is thus herald to seal the pact for homogenization under the banner of a good abstract universal that is valid for all, and the attendant obliteration of the geo-body politics of the Others’ knowledge(s).

The remit of the analytical space of para-translation third code (ideology), the epi-text figures as the site for the geo-body politics of *The Televangelist* (2016). I retrieve this geo-body-politics through the geo-historical location of the journalist-translator, Jonathan Wright. The latter’s ideological positioning (socio-cultural and institutional contexts) attests to the interconnectedness between the epistemic frontier of metropolitan translational knowledge production, and the global designs at play in the ideological titular packaging of the translation—and the consequential cultural branding of the translatee.

---

(SL) and Target Language (TL), especially in reference to the history of colonialism that brought it forth and the neo-imperialist formation underpinning cultural production and representation monopoly.

### **3.1. Jonathan Wright and the Epistemic Privilege of the Center: Geo-historical Location of the Journalist Translator and Mapping through Telling**

Coming from the metropolitan center, Jonathan Wright's life, journalistic career and later engagement with literary translation embody the epistemic privilege of the center with its incessant pursuit of mapping and covering the epistemic territorial frontiers of its differential Others. They, more specifically, exemplify the postmodern juncture of global modernity, where the poly-centric capitalist logic of expansion is hued and redeemed by the multicultural bid for mapping through objectified telling—tethered to the observer's privilege. This metropolitan telling imperative pays lip-service for recognition of difference, while scheming for what Mignolo terms as “a good abstract universal, valid for all” (2006).

English by nationality and birth, Wright's childhood was spent across the globe in Canada, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Germany. His education in Arabic, Turkish and Islamic civilization at St John's College, Oxford qualified him for a journalistic career. In 1979, he joined the American based International News Organization Reuters as correspondent and was appointed as Cairo bureau chief one year later. He was based in the Middle East for three decades across Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon, Tunisia, and the Persian Gulf. He was an eyewitness to many of the major events in the Middle East, including the assassination of the Egyptian President Sadat in 1981. In 1984, while on a reporting assignment for Reuters in the Bekaa Valley Lebanon, Wright was detained and held hostage by a Palestinian splinter group as part of the Lebanon hostage crisis. Wright escaped from captivity to a checkpoint manned by the mainly Druze Muslim Progressive Socialist Party. From 1998 to 2003, he was based in Washington, DC, covering US foreign policy for Reuters. He returned to Cairo and stayed until the fall of Mubarak's regime in 2011. In 2011, he contributed a piece to Reuters, entitled “Joy at Mubarak's demise [...] tense accession”, while not on Reuters' payroll (WRIGHT 14.02.2011). From 2009 to 2011, Wright was the editor of the Arab Media & Society Journal, published by the Kamal Adham Center for Journalism Training and Research at the American University in Cairo. He currently resides in London.

His literary translation career started in 2008 with the translation of Khaled el-Khamissi's best-selling book (2006) *المشاوير تاكسى*: حواديت المشاوير published by Aflame Books under the title *Taxi* (2008). Wright's translation *Taxi* (2008) was republished in 2011 by Qatar: Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation with a new conversion added by the writer and translator. The new publication for *Taxi* (2011) was subtitled “the novel that predicted the uprising”. The release of the new English edition of *Taxi* (2011) launched Wright's career-path as a renowned literary translator with his garnering a number of awards<sup>10</sup>, the last of which is the Said Ghobash Banipal Trust's award for his translation

---

<sup>10</sup> Wright won Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation for the translation of Azazeel by Youssef Ziedan in 2013. This prize was followed by Independent Foreign Fiction Prize for the translation of *The Iraqi Christ* by Hassan Blassim in 2014. In 2016, he won for the second time the Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation for his translation of *The Bamboo Stalk* by Saud Alsanousi.

of the 2013 Kuwaiti novel *سائق البامبو* by the Kuwaiti novelist Saud Alsanousi. The Kuwaiti novel *سائق البامبو* was translated into *The Bamboo Stalk* (SAUD ALSANOUSI / WRIGHT 2015).

### **3.2. Literary Translation Career and the Change in Cultural Policy:**

#### ***New Juncture of Arabic Literature in English Translation***

Unlike the first phase (1908-1967) of Arabic literature in English, spearheaded by Denys Johnson-Davies (1922-2017), the “doyen of translators” and “the leading Arabic-English translator of our time” in Allen and Said’s words, the subsequent phases (second, third and fourth) are marked by a change in translational cultural policy (cited in KHALIFA & ELGINDY 2014: 45). This change was triggered by the change in the cultural political economy of the region propelled by region propelled by the September 11 attacks in 2001 leading up to the Arab Spring in 2011. The latter spurred what Antoon qualifies as the West’s “forensic interest in the Arab World and Arabic Literature” (ARABLIT March 2010b), which produced new economics of production, and new cultural politics of translation.

Humphrey T. Davies, roughly belonging to the third (post Nobel prize period 1988-2001)<sup>11</sup> phase, could make a living as a full-time translator, contrasting with the first and second phase, where Johnson-Davies resorted to publishing volumes at his own expense due to lack of funding and market interest. Humphrey T. Davies approaches translation as a mystical endeavor with the translator’s job specified in terms of “listening to the voice in the text trying to reflect the text as closely as possible the essence of a good translator is to make the readers feel that they are hearing a voice that is distinctive mirrored through the translation” (Interview Oct 5, 2014). As an individual and cultural endeavor, Davies (2014) translates “in order to understand to

---

<sup>11</sup> Building on Altoma’s distinction (2005), Khalifa and Elguindy identifies three developmental phases for Arabic Literature in English Translation influenced by external and internal events and the turns in the cultural diplomatic policy propelled by National Defense and Education Act’ of 1958. The latter gave impetus to the translation from Arabic, with Arabic language identified among the modern foreign language crucial for the education of “specific defense-oriented personnel” (KHALIFA & ELGUINDY 2014: 46). The first phase (1908-1968) was characterized by a scholarly interest, where Arabic literary texts were chosen as socio-political documents regardless of their literary merits. Johnson-Davies “was accepted for publication as a work of scholarship rather than of any literary merits it might have (KHALIFA & ELGUINDY 2014). The second phase (1968–1988) was induced by the American act and was characterized by mini academic boom and avidity for texts that would be included in the curricula of American and British universities. The third (1988–2001) was the Nobel phase that garnered short-lived interest in Arabic literature by academically oriented English-speaking readership. Khalifa and Elguindy (2014) identify post 9/11 as the fourth phase propelling a lasting interest in Arabic Literature in translation market and publishing industry. This paper calls attention to the burgeoning rise of a fifth phase in the aftermath of the Arab Spring induced by the forensic interest in Arab culture as socio-political systems. This fifth phase is characterized by a new geo-regional and age-group focus, and cross genre interest. It is also qualified by a journalistic haste attitude to get the next Arab best seller. In short the fifth post-Arab-spring phase is characterized by new translational policies and politics that deviate from the traditional Orientalist paradigm of the Translator as Arabist and cultural communiqué.

resqueeze the goodness of the text to completely understand what is the writer doing and how he is doing [so as to acknowledge] and do something with every single written symbol on the page” (AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF CAIRO PRESS 2014).

Unlike Humphrey T. Davies, Wright’s take on translation is journalistic with the tacit attitude of *get things done*, and the story told. Wright’s basic postulation is that an Arabic-English translator does not need perfect fluency in Arabic. Rather, a translator’s job is confined “to learn most how to use English” (ARABLIT March 2010a). For Wright, translation is not a “creative work”, despite his proclamation during his fight with the Egyptian writer Alaa Aswany and Knopf publishing house over the English translation of Aswany’s 2013 novel نادى-السيارات. Knopf contracted with the translator Russel Harris and Aswany’s novel was translated into English under the title *The Automobile Club of Egypt* (ASWANY & HARRIS 2015).

In the course of the discursive fight with Aswany and Knopf, Wright put the case that it is the translator’s job to find the best way to communicate, making his case within the heated debate (intellectual and theoretical) on the translator’s visibility<sup>12</sup> (WRIGHT 23.10.2013). In his tenrules for translation, Wrights believes that if the text contains many Quranic references, the translator should be bold to intervene, translate them himself/herself, and resort to omission in line with the contextual praxis of textual reception. He believes that when “negotiating terms, remember that an English translation is at least 20 percent more ‘wordy’ than the equivalent Arabic text” (ARABLIT July 2011).

Wright’s journalistic nuanced take on literary translation and engagement with Arabic literature translation industry epitomize what Humphrey T. Davies terms for the post September 2001 attacks’ phase as “a fecund period in Arabic literature” (AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF CAIRO PRESS 2014). Booth similarly qualifies this phase in terms of “the current haste to find the next Arab best seller” (BOOTH 2008). Booth thence laments the current orientation towards “clichéd language, erasure of Arabic idiom and cleaning up” forced by the Saudi female author, Rajaa Alsanea over the translation of her novel بنات الرياض (2004) (BOOTH 2008). Alsanea sided with the set norms of the translation publishing industry forcing on Booth the cleaning up and the domestication of the cultural specificity of the novel to meet the expectation of Anglo-American readership and project the modernity of Saudi contemporary culture (BOOTH 2008). Booth translated بنات الرياض (2004) into *Girls of Riyadh* in 2007 (cf. THE COMPLETE REVIEW 2007).

Wright’s coincidental engagement with literary translation (not his intention according to his statement) came particularly due to the journalistic forensic interest in the Arab street, which *Taxi* (2006) addressed. His politics and poetics towards the epistemic primacy and precedence of English over Arabic, reflective of burgeoning orientation towards the new clichéd language cleaned up of the linguistic cultural nuances, are indicative of the interdependent change in cultural policy and economics

---

<sup>12</sup> In his blog, Wright defends Aswany’s *Automobile Club* against its belittlement from the literary elite “arguing that Egypt and the Arab world in general needed good story-tellers who put plot and character ahead of literary ostentation and obsessive self-analysis” (WRIGHT 23.10.2013).

of cultural production in Arabic-English translation market. They are particularly illustrative of the old-cum-new orientation towards *abstract universal, valid for all*, and the underlying Anglophone homogenizing logic of poly-centric capitalist cultural economy. The latter pursues the cultural translation of the Others' cultures in metropolitan terms, and along Anglo-American cultural semiosis. More specifically, in the case of the Islamic Other and the context of *The Televangelist's* iconography, Wright's journalistic translational poetics and politics shed light on the interconnection between the haste for the new Arab bestseller, the new branding policy for Arab literature in English translation, and the new designed semiosis for the space of religion in Middle Eastern cultural politics. The induction of *The Televangelist* (2016), through the new AUC imprint and its digital version, Hoopoe Fiction, sets a new juncture for AUC Press epistemic mapping, and whence a new semiotic branding for a Hoopoe-packaged Middle East (Fig.1).



Fig. 1: AUCP Imprint Hoopoe

#### 4. Epi-text/ Peri-text and the New Designed Semiosis: Hoopoe and the Cultural Rebranding of the Middle East

Initiated in 2016, Hoopoe Fiction targets “engaged, open-minded readers hungry for outstanding fiction that challenges headlines, re-imagines histories, and celebrates original storytelling” ([Hoopoe https://hoopoefiction.com/about/](https://hoopoefiction.com/about/)).

Notwithstanding its longstanding monopoly of the market of modern Arabic fiction in English translation (KHALIFA & ELGINDY 2014), AUC Press's Hoopoe launch constitutes a proactive branding strategy<sup>13</sup>, designed to innovate on the publisher's cultural practice, tap into post-Arab spring markets, and thence repackage and rebrand new cultural policies. As such, Hoopoe sets a new juncture for AUC top-level and elite driven orientation process towards translating Arabs' literature and Middle Eastern

---

<sup>13</sup> In business and marketing, rebranding references the process of changing the corporate image of an organization. This is done through donning a new name, symbol, or change in design for an already-established brand. The idea behind rebranding is to create a different identity for a brand in the market. There is two types of rebranding: proactive and reactive rebranding. Proactive rebranding references the situation, where the company recognizes that there is an opportunity to grow, innovate, tap into new businesses or customers, and to reconnect with its users. Reactive rebranding occurs when the existing brand has been discontinued or changed due to mergers or acquisitions, legal issues, negative publicity.

cultural politics. This juncture is structured along the frontier epistemology and impetus for discursive mapping through postmodern de-territorializing narration. According to Hoopoe Fiction website, the new imprint target readers who are “hungry” for fiction that challenges headlines and re-imagines history along the “growing Arab diasporas; students of and visitors to the Middle East” (HOOPOE n.d.). The imprint production is also designed for “those with a professional interest in the seismic changes reshaping people’s lives across this enigmatic part of the world” (HOOPOE n.d.). Hoopoe’s targeted writings map the geographical boundaries of the Middle East from “Marrakesh to Baghdad and Khartoum to Aleppo for adventurous readers everywhere” (HOOPOE n.d.). The focus of Hoopoe’s cultural content is contemporary writings that flout the boundaries of genres: “From historical epics, social satire, police procedurals and stories of the future Middle East: we will publish the exciting and the unexpected” (HOOPOE n.d.). Hoopoe’s digital space, [hoopoefiction.com](http://hoopoefiction.com), constructs a de-territorial postmodern trajectory for “a like-minded growing community around the world ... [sharing] inspiring writing from the Middle East ... explore interviews with our authors and commentaries from our translators and editors” (HOOPOE n.d.). This bid for reconnecting with its potential customers is relayed through a constructed juncture between Orientalist imagery and contemporary interest in the Middle East. The Middle East, de-territorialized and de-contextualized, is verbally constructed in terms of “far-flung lands ... for intrigue, and crime fanatics” (HOOPOE n.d.). The new semiosis for the new AUC Middle East is sealed through the localized domestication of the imprint icon, hoopoe. The cultural semiotation of the hoopoe is verbally framed in Islamic mystical term, away from its biblical significance and through Orientalist universalizing aesthetics. Under the heading “What is a hoopoe?”, the website provides the following answer:

A hoopoe is a beautiful bird found across the Middle East, known for its distinctive crown of black and chestnut feathers. Like the cuckoo, its name is derived from its unique call. In his famous epic *The Conference of the Birds*, Sufi poet Faridud-Din Attar casts the hoopoe as the leader of all birds and the storyteller on the flock’s quest for enlightenment. In the Qur’an the hoopoe is depicted as a trusted messenger, carrying messages between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba; while in ancient Egypt the hoopoe was sacred and was a symbol of the heir apparent to the throne. (HOOPOE n.d.)

Thus, Hoopoe’s website verbally articulates its Orientalist-hued venture into the new epistemic frontier of contemporary Middle East, and new cultural branding of a new vision for a potentially New Middle East. The debut production of Hoopoe imprint is *The Televangelist* (2016). The titular translational choice and the new imprint’s rebranding iconography pinpoint to the emergence of a new Anglophone forensic interest away from the Arab streets and towards the nexus between religion and politics in the Middle East. They also combine to set a configured narration poetics and politics for the space of religion in the globally oriented modern Middle Eastern culture.

5. مولانا [Maulana] and The Televangelist:

New Forensic Interest and the Post-Arab Spring Epistemic Frontier

Whereas Wright’s translation of *Taxi* (2008, 2011) was induced by the journalistic forensic interest in the Arab street, *The Televangelist* (2016) carves a niche for the nexus between politics, religion and youth culture in the Middle East. Its translation attests to the emergence of a new juncture for the forensic interest in post-Arab spring Egypt. This new forensic interest focuses on the place of religion in Egyptian cultural politics, and sheds light on the contemporary cultural dynamics of Arabic literature movement in translation—across written and visual media. This is particularly evident in connection to the movement of the ST concurrently to English and the filmic screen, and the changing scheme of patronage industry for contemporary Arabic literature.

Written by Essa, a political journalist-turned writer, the novel deals with Sheikh Hatem, a young Azhari scholar versed in Islamic jurisprudence. Sheikh Hatem’s charisma opens up the opportunities to the silver screen, where he is entrusted to provide for fast-delivered *fatwas* through the televised religious programs infiltrating the privately-owned satellite channels. Sheikh Hatem’s fame brings him close to Egypt’s political elite and circle of intrigues. His influence on youth places him under the securities’ tight watch, and calls for his later enlistment to address the Muslim youth apostasy of Islam and conversion in to Christianity. Called upon by high state personnel, he is assigned the task of talking the personnel’s renegade relative out of his conversion into Christianity, and back to Islam. He falls out of favor with the political elites, and is denied the glamour of the silver screen. The novel tackles the questions of religion, politics and spirituality. It also addresses the space of religion in contemporary Egypt. Contrary to the traditional scheme for literary patronage, مولانا [Maulana] (ESSA 2012) garners its acclaim from journalistic circles.

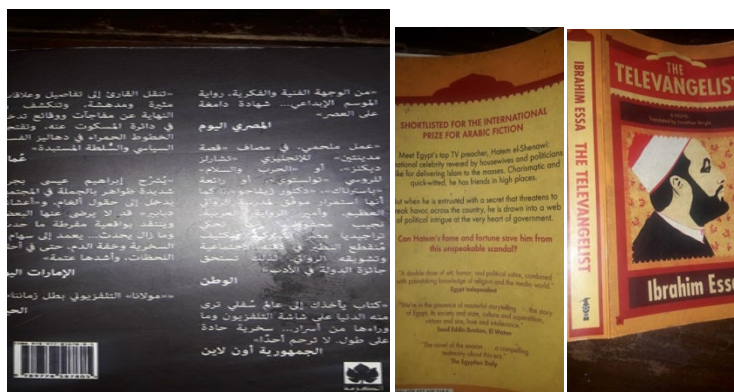


Fig. 2: ST journalistic-centered patronage and TT acclaim by journalistic circles

The book blurb is framed through acclaim from journalistic venues including *al-Masry al-youm*, *al-Watan*, *Oman*, *al-Emarat al-Youm* and *al-Hayat*. The book is published by al-Karma—an Emirate publishing house. The book was brought to a wider fame by its cinematic adaptation into a movie مولانا (2016). The film visual packaging and promotion simultaneously take from and inform the book’s subsequent versions.





Fig. 3: The book cover of Essa's 2014 edition and its rapport with the filmic adaption imagery

Dealing with the intersection between religion and politics, *مولانا* [Maulana] (ESSA 2012) provides for fictional narrative construction of what Mahmood in 2005 ethnographically studied and culturally translated in terms of “the politics of piety” in *Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and Feminist Subject* (MAHMOOD 2005). In 2013, Abou Bakr has drawn and innovated on Mahmoud’s established labeling category, employing *satellite piety* as a new analytical category for qualifying the contemporary postmodern juncture between the Islamic preaching grass-root movement and the new media technologies (2013). In her “Satellite Piety: Contemporary TV Islamic Programs in Egypt” (2013), Abou Bakr tackles the question of the configuration of the piety movements’ methods of message-delivery along the new media, and the implication for the changing parameter of the religious social practice and oppositional space in Egyptian cultural politics. The label *satellite piety* was her designated linguistic category for tracing the posited change. Abu Bakr’s intervention thus sets and codifies a scholarly and translational category for the televised preaching movement and its impact in Egyptian cultural landscape. According to Abu Bakr, the term *satellite piety* refers to “the phenomenon of increased and diversified satellite religious programs in contemporary Egypt [...] [feeding] into new senses of a public space that is discursive, performative and participative’ [...] ‘processes of cultural translation’.” (ABOU BAKR 2013: 128)

### 5.1. Outside the Piety Paradigm: The Televangelist’ Peri-text and Para-textual Signification

Skewing the established referencing categories for Egyptian piety movement (the politics of piety and satellite piety – MAHMOOD 2005, ABOU BAKR 2013), Wright gets the story told through Western epistemology employing the category *televangelist*. This chosen linguistic category in the titular framing of the TT tell-tales the translator’s attitudinal position towards the epistemic primacy of Anglo-American cultural categories. The titular choice not just reflects the calculated constructed signification of the intersection between the new media technologies, religion and politics in global cultural politics. It showcases the designated politics for mainstreaming an American specific cultural category to the “far-flung lands ... for intrigue, and crime fanatics”

(HOOPOE n.d.). In the book blurb (back cover), the words “secret” and “political intrigue” are used to frame the story within the metropolitan logic and representation of the darker Other. The latter’s darkness and intrigues provide for the foil and pretext for the primacy of the Anglo-American normative Self, and the power privilege position of their telling. The designed outcome is packaging and rebranding the Islamic culture of the Muslim Middle East after the neo-imperial bid for an abstract universal religion for all. This abstract universal religion places traditional religion within postmodern technologies through maintaining the homogenizing thrust of metropolitan labeling of the translatese. This dimension becomes evident, especially in connection to the AUC Press imprint symbolism in biblical cosmology and contemporary Middle Eastern cultural politics.

Televangelist is a linguistic category devised in Anglo American cultural politics during the fifties to designate the new dissemination technology of evangelism through religious programs on the silver screen. Televangelist programs were usually hosted by a fundamentalist Protestant minister. The on-TV services were conducted to spread the Gospel among the youth and enlist donation for the dissemination of the Word of God. Televangelism is notorious for the fundamentalist protestant politics, which is hinged on both White supremacist ethos and oppressive gender politics in recreation of the traditional myth of the City on the Hill of the American forefathers. Evangelist/Televangelism is the structuring subtext for American politics. They also furnish the unspoken of subtext of the Anglo-American-specific frontier territorial epistemology.

The imposition of Televangelism on Arab religious contemporary culture and the concurrent discursive telling of the Middle Eastern Islamic religious identity through American-specific socio-cultural category are not just meant to map the Muslim Middle East after the American right-winged image. In conjunction with Hoopoe fiction iconography, the titular framing pours into the theo-ego-centric packaging of contemporary Middle Eastern cultural politics that construct a theo-centric and egoistical geo-strategic order. This geo-strategic order exercises universalized domestication of Middle Eastern Islamic religious culture to exorcise its ritualistic-nuanced epistemic difference, and thence structures a niche for an interfaith ideological space. The latter, unlike inter-religious dialogical pursuit<sup>14</sup>, is a space where Abrahamic faiths, in the form of Sunni Islam, Christianity and Judaism, are brought in dialogue with the Tele-theo- and ego- logic of global modernity. This is particularly substantiated in light of the translator's scant note at the margin of *The Televangelist* (2016) – in the colophon.

---

<sup>14</sup> There are three adjectives utilized in the discursive debate on the relation between religions and polity in the postmodern world. These are *ecumenical*, *interfaith*, and *interreligious* relations. Ecumenical references the relations and prayer with other Christians. It engages with the sectarian dimension of religious discourse. Interfaith refers to the relations with members of the Abrahamic faiths (Jewish and Muslim traditions). Interreligious is used to refer to the relations with other religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism – as opposed to interreligious. (<http://legacy.archchicago.org/departments/ecumenical/Relations.htm> (01.08.2020))

Indeed, despite Wright's valorization of watered-down intervention and omission as the opted translational strategy with respect to Quranic references and cultural specific items, Wright takes the pain to write a five-note paragraph commentary on his translation. The first three notes deal with citation from the Quran and specification of the transliteration of "Dhimmi" and "Mutanassir", respectively defined in terms of "non-Muslim living in Muslim-dominated state, with protected status but with some legal and fiscal disadvantage" and "a convert to Christianity" (ESSA / WRIGHT 2016: 483). The last two points deals with hadith reference, and what would seem as scholar verification from Islamic tradition to the historical allusion that brought forth the distinction between Sunni and Shiia in Islamic theo-political order and tradition: "Yazidibn-Muawiyah was the Umayyad caliph famous for ordering the attack on the Prophet's grandson Hussein at Karbala, a crucial event in Shiite history" (ESSA / WRIGHT 2016: 483). The last point is presented without source-citation for his presented as fact in Islamic political tradition.

Similar to the ST, مولانا [Maulana] (ESSA 2012), the acclaim of *The Televangelist* (2016) and testimonials for the translation come from journalistic sources—*Egypt Independent*, *Al-Watan* and *the Egyptian Daily*. This configured testimonial input attests to the new turn in literary patronage in contemporary cultural policies of global reception politics.

## 5.2. The Semiotics of the Peri-textual Imaging:

### *Book Cover and the Privilege of Western Visual Grammar*

The structured niche for an interfaith dialogical space is further enforced through the book-cover imaging. The latter adapts Essa's 2012 edition to compose *The Televangelist* (2016) along what Kress and Van-Leeuwen formulates in terms of the Western-specific grammar of visual design (1996). The end of the composition is to foster the design for the inter-faith based cultural communication and the domestication of Sunni-Muslim difference within the cosmology of global designs.

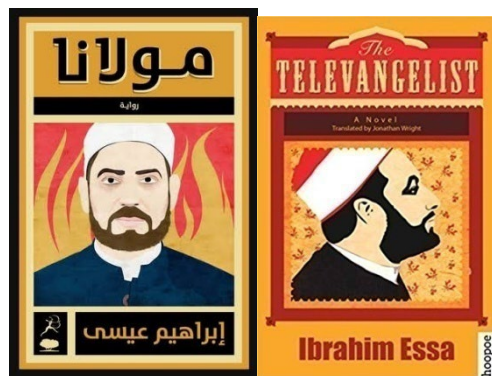


Fig. 4: The book cover of Essa's 2012 version and its adaptation along the Western visual grammar in *The Televangelist*

The book-cover's masthead is framed in a dome like iconography topping the word "THE TELEVANGELIST" in capitalized bold letter type. The footer contains the name of the writer Ibrahim Essa in bold big sized letters. The picture in between is for a young

Sunni turbaned Sheikh, identified by the white head-piece—in distinction from the Shiite black turban. The Sheikh's gaze is directed to the right side. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), this right forward gaze constructs the anticipation for something in the air with “the right side known as *new* ... and not yet known” in western visual vocabulary (KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN 1996: 9). The icon of the hoopoe appears at the bottom of the book spike with the writer's name, the book title, “THE TELEVANGELIST”.



Fig. 5: *TT Spike*

The visual effect is an actualized potential for a forward-looking Islamic exegetical practice, exorcised of traditional differences and capacitated to pinpoint to something “new and not yet known”. The visual outcome is post-colonial visual iconography and ecologies for the cultural translation of a new rebranded religious space in the Arab Middle East. This rebranded religious space is visually constructed to synchronize with the post-Arab spring youth-centered cultural politics, and the metropolitan ecologies of translating the for-long constructed as the Islamic Other.

### **5.3. Post-colonial Ecologies: the Middle East in Cultural Translation**

The Middle East is caught up in a process of cultural translation along dualistic schemes discerned through the post-colonial ecologies of contemporary cultural economy. The first scheme is concerned with the intersection between the local, cultural and aesthetic in the journalistic-turn of literary production and patronage. It is also furnished through the contemporary signification and communication of the cultural policies pertaining to the movement of the written text to the poly-semiotic textual tapestry of filmic translation and the latter's impetuous role in visual and inter-linguistic translation in current cultural politics. The second scheme, relating to the visual-centric cultural policies of global modernity, is the global, political and cultural schemes that enact the metropolitan ecologies of signification in line with global designs. This dimension takes shape through the interface between the colonialist Orientalist imagery/imagination and the ongoing repertoire with the global (universalistic theo-ego-centric) matrix of cultural semiotation. The outcome is the construction of religious-iconto-politics that is embedded in Judeo-Christian and Sunni Islamic tradition – against Shiite tradition implicitly located at the other end of the epistemic frontier. In the case of the text under-study, this is enacted through the proactive branding strategy of the AUC Press imprint. Hoopoe, a bird designating wisdom in Islamic tradition and assuming nationalistic signification in contemporary

Israeli cultural politics, is semiotically re-contextualized and re-signified to furnish a new cultural icon for the New Middle East. The outcome is Televangelism – a category that now can cross the boundaries of religious epistemic differences and geo-political divides, especially in connection to interfaith discursively constructed dialogue and the contemporary Holy Grail for an abstract universal religion, valid for all. Muslim Televangelists is now an established journalistic category making the headline of news and academic writings covering the new Muslim Preacher movement round the globe. The normative translational strategy for Essa's book title مولانا [Maulana] would be transliteration, especially in light of the post-colonial turn in TS, and the signification of the word *Maulana* throughout the English text. Maulana is currently a loan word in English language referencing "A Muslim man respected for his religious knowledge or scholarship. 2. Used as a courtesy title for such a leader or scholar" (Free Dictionary). "Televangelist", as a linguistic category, does not figure except in the title of TT.

## 6. Conclusion

In this research, I dealt with a number of research queries that set its critical examination of the translation of Essa's text into *The Televangelist* (2016). These queries informed my argument for the theo-ego politics of the English translation and the consequential cultural rebranding of a new inter-faith-based religious space for the New Middle East—fit for the projected structure for global governance. My endeavor was specifically induced by the signification of the cultural translation of the Muslim preacher movement away from the established scholarly category of piety politics and satellite piety (MAHMOOD 2005; ABOU BAKR 2013) and through the American-specific socio-cultural and political category. I enacted de-colonial epistemic shift through employing marginal translation as a theoretical paradigm emerging from outside the Anglo-American academia, and situated at the margin of TS. I examined the particular juncture between the theo-ego-politics of knowledge production in translation and the forensic Anglo-American interest in Arab Street and religious culture. I used the socio-historical perspective of the Vigo school T&P research group and their take on para-texts to decode the relations between the ST and TT to their myriad contexts. I studied those relations and their implication in the ideological regulation of the strategic Other in translation, and for rebranding of new cultural policies for the Middle East. I reached the following findings. First is the administration of the AUC Press' new juncture for the top-level and elite driven process of translating the Arab Middle East by the Hoopoe Fiction. The latter capitalizes on the new dynamics of literary production in the Arab World to set new politics for mapped narration of the changing cultural politics of contemporary Middle East. Second, this carved niche for new politics of story-telling and mapping is enacted along the materiality of communication of postmodern cultural communication. The latter thrives on the poly-semiotic signification structure—located at the para-texts. Third is the tactile politics of cultural branding and its covert bid for signification and naturalization of new iconography for New Middle East. Ultimately, I make a final argument for de-colonial epistemic shift in TS theoretical knowledge production. This de-colonial shift is posited through attention

to the validity of the theoretical inputs from outside the Anglo-American academia. These theoretical inputs from the margin of translation theories are likely to present new takes and tools to decoding the encrypted metropolitan designs situated at the margin of translation. Employing marginal translation, I endeavored to enact its proposed de-colonial epistemic shift through reading the margin of the translation in the para-texts as a working concept for the myriad contexts of production and reception. The main aim is to critically engage with the socio-political signification of Televangelism away from the established piety politics and Satellite piety, and through the theo-ego-naturalizing politics of Anglo-American universals.

## References

ABOU-BAKR, Omaima (2013): "Satellite Piety: Contemporary TV Islamic Program in Egypt." In: EL HAMAMSY, W. & SOLIMAN, M. (eds): *Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa*. New York: Routledge, 113–129.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203098653>

AHRAM ONLINE (Sept. 2011): "New release: Khaled Al-Khamissi's 'Taxi' in a new English post-revolution edition."

<https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/22834.aspx> (23.07.2021)

ALSANOUSI, Saud & WRIGHT, Jonathan (transl.) (2015): *The Bamboo Stalk*. Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing.

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO PRESS (05.10.2014): "Translating from Arabic: Humphrey Davies talks about the realities and challenges." [Video]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5nSYvglVAk> (23.07.2021).

ARABLIT (July 2010) "Ten Rules for Translating: Humphrey Davies and Jonathan Wright."

<https://arablit.org/2011/07/05/ten-rules-for-translating-humphrey-davies-and-jonathan-wright> (23.07.2021)

ARABLIT (March 2010a): "Jonathan Wright: The Journalist as Literary Translator."

<https://arablit.org/2010/03/11/jonathan-wright-the-journalist-as-literary-translator> (23.07.2021)

ARABLIT (March 2010b): "Sinaan Antoon on the West's 'Forensic Interest'."

<https://arablit.org/2010/03/04/sinaan-antoon-on-the-wests-forensic-interest-in-the-arab-world/> (23.07.2021)

ASHCROFT, Bill, GRIFFITHS, Garreth, & TIFFIN, Helen (eds) (2006): *The post-colonial studies reader*: Second Edition. London; New York: Routledge.

ASWANY, Alaa Al / HARRIS, Russell (transl.) (2015): *The Club of Automobiles*. Cairo: AUC PRESS.

- BATCHELOR, Kathryn (2018): *Translation and Paratexts*. New York, London: Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351110112>
- BOOTH, Marilyn (2008): "Further: Where is the translator's voice?" *Al-Ahram Weekly* (05.08.2008). <https://www.masress.com/en/ahramweekly/7393>. (23.07.2021)
- CASTRO, O. / ANDREWS, Mark (transl.) (2009): "(Re-)examining horizons in feminist translation studies: towards a third wave", *MonTI. Monografías de Traducción e Interpretación* (1), 59–86. <http://doi.org/10.6035/MonTI.2009.1.3>
- ESSA, Ibrahim (2012): *مولانا [Maulana]*. Cairo: al-Sherouk.
- ESSA, Ibrahim / WRIGHT, Jonathan (transl.) (2016): *The Televangelist*. Cairo: Hoopoe.
- GARRIDO VILARIÑO, Xóan Manuel (2011): "The paratranslation of the works of Primo Levi", In: FEDERICI, Federico M. (ed.): *Translating Dialects and Languages of Minorities*, Bern: Peter Lang, 65–88.
- GENETTE, Gerard / LEWIN, Jane E. (trans.) (1997): *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511549373>
- GROSGOUEL, Ramón (2011): "Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality", *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1 (1).  
<https://doi.org/10.5070/T411000004>
- HOOPOE (n.d.) "About Hoopoe", <https://hoopoefiction.com/about/> (23.07.2021).
- HUGGAN, Graham & TIFFAN, Helen (2010): *Post-colonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animal and Environment*. Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- KHALIFA, Abdel Wahab & ELGINDY, Ahmed (2014): "The Reality of Arabic Translation in English: A Sociological Approach." *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language* 2 (2), 42–56. [http://www.ijsc.net/article\\_5433.html](http://www.ijsc.net/article_5433.html)
- KRESS, Günther R., & VAN LEEUWEN, Theo (1996): *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge.
- LITTAU, Karin (1996): "Translation in the Age of Postmodern Production: From Text to Intertext to Hypertext", *Forum for modern language studies* 32 (1), 81–96.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/fmls/XXXIII.1.81>
- LITTAU, Karin (2011): "First Steps Towards a Media History of Translation." *Translation Studies* 4 (3), 261–281.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2011.589651>
- LITTAU, Karin (2016): "Translation and the Materialities of communication." *Translation Studies* 9 (1), 82–96.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2015.1063449>

MAHMOOD, Saba (2005): *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

MEHREZ, Samia (1994/2005): *Egyptian Writers between History and Fiction*. Cairo: American University Press.

MIGNOLO, Walter D. & TLOSTANOVA, Madina V. (2006): "Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge." *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9 (2): 205–221.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431006063333>

MIGNOLO, Walter D. (2009): "Coloniality: The Darker Side of Modernity." In: *Modernologies: Contemporary Artists Researching Modernity and Modernism*. Barcelona: MACBA, 2009, 39–49.

[https://img.macba.cat/public/PDFs/walter\\_mignolo\\_modernologies\\_eng.pdf](https://img.macba.cat/public/PDFs/walter_mignolo_modernologies_eng.pdf)  
(01.10.2021)

MIGNOLO, Walter D. (2013): "Geo-politics of sensing and knowing: On (de)coloniality, border thinking and epistemic disobedience." *Confero* 1 (1), 120–150.

<https://doi.org/10.3384/confero.2001-4562.13v1i1129>

MUKHERJEE, Upamanyu Pablo (2010): "Green Postcolonialism and Postcolonial Green." In: *Postcolonial Environment. Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 39–58.

[https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230251328\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230251328_3)

NELSON, Jake Robert (2015): "For a Postcolonial Ecocritical Approach to International Relations." In: Chase, A. (ed.): *Transatlantic Perspectives on Diplomacy and Diversity*. New York: Humanity in Action Press, 139–150.

[https://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledge\\_detail/for-a-postcolonial-ecocritical-approach-to-international-relations/](https://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledge_detail/for-a-postcolonial-ecocritical-approach-to-international-relations/) (01.09.2021)

PYM, Anthony (2011): "Translation Research Terms: a Tentative Glossary for Moment of Perplexity." In: PYM, A. (ed): *Translation Research Projects* 3 (1). Tarragona: Intercultural Research Group, 75–99.

<https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/194357>

QUIJANO, Aníbal (2007): "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality". *Cultural Studies* 21 (2–3), 155–67.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353>

SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty (1993) [2004]: "The politics of translation", In: *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. New York: Routledge, 179–200.

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO (May 2016): "AUC Press Launches Hoopoe, A New Literary Imprint for Contemporary Fiction From the Middle East."

<https://www.aucegypt.edu/media/media-releases/auc-press-launches-hoopoe-new-literary-imprint-contemporary-fiction-middle-east> (23.07.2021).

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO (n.d): "Deny Johnson – Davies."



<http://schools.aucegypt.edu/research/cts/Pages/DenyJohnson-Davies.aspx>  
(23.07.2021).

THE COMPLETE REVIEW (2007): "Girls of Riyadh by Rajaa Alsanea."  
<http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/arab/alsanea.htm> (23.07.2021)

TOGERSON, Douglas (2005): "Green Politics for a Divided Planet: Towards a Postcolonial Environmentalism." Paper presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions in Granada. <https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/PaperDetails/13578> (01.09.2021)

WRIGHT, Jonathan (14.02.2011): "Witness: Joy at Mubarak's demise contrasts with tense accession.", *Reuters World News*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-witness-egypt-presidents/witness-joy-at-mubaraks-demise-contrasts-with-tense-accession-idUSTRE71A7BB20110214> (30.06.2021)

WRIGHT, Jonathan (23.10.2013): "Why translators should give Dr Alaa Al Aswany and Knopf Doubleday a wide berth.", *Jonathan Wright Blog*.  
<http://jnthnwright.blogspot.com/2013/10/why-translators-should-give-dr-alaa-al.html> (30.06.2021)

YUSTE FRÍAS, José (2012) "Para-textual Elements in Translation: Paratranslating Titles in Children's Literature" In: GIL-BAJARDÍ, A.; ORERO, P. & ROVIRA-ESTEVA S. (eds): *Translation Peripheries. Para-textual Elements in Translation*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 117–134.

YUSTE FRÍAS, José (2015): "Paratraducción: la traducción de los márgenes, al margen de la traducción." *DELTA* 2015 (31), 317–347.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0102-445031725373379053>