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*The Conference on Culture in Marseille will provide an opportunity for thinking, in a collective, autonomous way, about the modalities of the "Translating in the Mediterranean" project, whose foundations were laid in 2005, and on its objectives, methods and priorities, starting with one of its particular focal areas: the written word. Being articulated in practical terms onto a more general discussion, the "Translation, writing, libraries" workshop will also be a forum for raising questions about the potential role of libraries in the implementation of a Euro-Mediterranean cultural policy on translation. From there, it will proceed to a wider consideration of how libraries can contribute to the development and dissemination of knowledge, particularly as catalysts of cooperation. The present text gives an overview of the problematic and the issues involved, and introduces a certain number of questions that the workshop intends to deal with.*

## **Translation, writing, libraries**

### **Introductory notes**

The space of the self resonates with more than just a single voice:  
why then should they all fall silent, except one?  
Alaa Khaled<sup>1</sup>

"Cultures" – as they are called – do not sum up.  
They meet, mingle, change, reconfigure.  
They place one another "in culture", open one another up,  
irrigate and desiccate one another, fertilise and graft onto one another.  
Jean-Luc Nancy<sup>2</sup>

"Where are the books?" whispered Master Osman.  
"Which ones?" replied the dwarf. "The Korans of the Yemen,  
in Kufic writing, the library of Tabriz, brought back by the  
Blessed Sultan Selim I the Cruel, those of the proscriptions,  
the volumes presented by the ambassadors of Venice to the  
grandfather of our Sultan, or the books from Constantinople that  
were left here after the taking of the city by Mehmed the Conqueror?"  
"Those given by Shah Tahmasp to Sultan Selim, thirty years ago."  
Orhan Pamuk<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In "Rôles multiples, voix plurielles", in *Territoire Méditerranée*, ed. C. Redalié, A. Laufer and M. Farré, Geneva, Labor et Fides, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> In "Eloge de la mêlée" (a tribute to Sarajevo), the inaugural text to *Transeuropéennes* No. 1, "L'Europe dessaisie", Paris, January 1993.

<sup>3</sup> In *My Name is Red*, London, Faber & Faber, 2001.

In an interview with Anne Laufer and Sofiane Hadjhadj in 2004,<sup>4</sup> Jean-Luc Godard criticised those excesses of translation which, on account of systematic sub-titling, render language differences, so to speak, inaudible, along with the worlds they represent and the realities that mould them. He felt it was necessary to submit to a multilingual confrontation if we were to understand that we do not understand one another. Provocative as this position may be, applied to an event such as the Marseille workshop, which is partly concerned with translation, it emphasises the risks of "false fraternity" when translation becomes reduced to the transmission of a message. It advocates embracing the inappropriable strangeness of differences between languages, insofar as they signify a relationship to the world. And this message, as it happens, resonates strongly in the Mediterranean region, where we think we know one another very well; where the geography of our exchanges is sometimes over-taxed; and where misunderstandings are rife, though a desire for "living together" still, admittedly, persists.

It is in an approach to comprehension which is not one-sided or preconceived that we need to situate the issue of translation,<sup>5</sup> but also in a certain approach to liberation and implementation of knowledge and imagination. Translation today, apart from some very recent developments, is a strange, overlooked component of cultural policies and intercultural practices.

### **So long an absence...**

Is it not to a "false fraternity" à la Godard that we are exposed by the motif of "intercultural dialogue", given that it circumvents languages and imaginary faculties, with their hybrid profusion, density, complexity and heterogeneity, while at the same time missing out on that which could both strengthen and connect them: translation, transmission, effective circulation?

Intercultural dialogue,<sup>6</sup> in the form that it has gradually taken on since the start of the 1990s, has tended to avoid geostrategic realities and their impact on societies, in the context of which it has nonetheless been historically located.<sup>7</sup> If it overlooks the link between culture and politics, it could end up being seen as devoid of content. At present, however, there appears to be an upsurge of concrete, contemporary cultural proposals in the Euro-Mediterranean space, accompanied by a clear identification of needs. There are new links to be forged between cultures and territories, languages and societies. Cultural diversity cannot be dealt with in isolation from economic and social realities, and their contexts. Contrasts in the conditions of production and distribution of knowledge and art cannot be ignored, any more than inequalities of access to networks of technological expertise, further complexified by logics of political or religious censorship, or by absolute submission to market logics that give rise to other forms of censorship. This is also the context around which the problematics of translation, writing and libraries are centred.

Up to the present day, as far as cultural diversity is concerned, translation has been totally absent from public and institutional agendas. But diversity exerts an ongoing influence over the cultural policies of the States that have signed the UNESCO convention, and it is a

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<sup>4</sup> "Personne n'est à sa place", in *Territoire Méditerranée* (op. cit.)

<sup>5</sup> Here I would refer the reader to the perspectives explored by the participants in the "Images et écrits" workshop held in 2006 in Paris: opening up alternatives (T. Chikhaoui), freeing the imagination, giving full play to the equivocal, polysemic, polyphonic nature of languages and cultures.

<sup>6</sup> Which is being celebrated this year by the European Union.

<sup>7</sup> Firstly as a response to the Huntingtonian ideology that posits a "clash of civilizations", then as an attempt to qualify the "war against terrorism".

guiding thread of the European Agenda for Culture in the Age of Globalisation, as proposed by the European Commission in May 2007.

In Athens, in May 2008, an initial turning point was finally reached when, on the initiative of the review *Transeuropéennes*, seconded by the French authorities, the Euro-Mediterranean ministers of culture adopted a proposal on the importance of translation. A second step is currently being taken, with the proposals put forward by the European Commissioner for Multilingualism, Leonard Orban; and the 2008 conference on multilingualism saw the tabling of a European policy proposal on translation. It is to be hoped that these encouraging signs, which will be taken up again in the conclusion of the present text, may lead to concrete policies, adequately financed.

### **Translating, between cultures**

It is the very idea of "translating, between cultures"<sup>8</sup> that needs to be brought to the fore. Can one conceive of a real "dialogue" between different viewpoints, and in their interstices, that does not involve translation, in other words the test of difference, with the concomitant question of untranslatability? In a judicious reply to Jean-Philippe Milet during the "Idioms, nationalities, deconstructions" conference in Rabat, in April 1996,<sup>9</sup> Jacques Derrida said: "This infinite otherness, this infinite irreducibility of an incommensurable distance, this absolute incommensurability does not prevent something happening, whether it be talking, or waging war, or dreaming of peace, or being submerged by compassion. On the contrary, this otherness, this impossibility is its very precondition. There is an infinity of untranslatable worlds, and this untranslatability is a precondition to the advent of the one for the other." The major work *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies* is subtitled "Dictionnaire des intraduisibles", and this in itself discloses the real scope of the enterprise. As its editor, Barbara Cassin, says in her introduction: "Untranslatability is really that which one does not cease (not to) translate."<sup>10</sup>

Translation is a mode of relationship between languages, types of imagination, forms of knowledge and representations. It is a mode of relationship of the self to the self, and of the self to others. It could contribute to the emergence of a "geophilosophy"<sup>11</sup> of the Mediterranean, conceived of as openness to the self and to other worlds, as work on frontiers that might result from the "constant inter-translations of a plurality of languages that bring together thought processes from different horizons."<sup>12</sup> And as regards the "Translating in the Mediterranean" horizon, "over the next ten years, the Mediterranean region needs to become a fabric of translation."<sup>13</sup>

In a world largely pervaded by images, instrumentalised and dominated by logics of simplification, languages are reduced to messages, and messages to watchwords, or mere signals. Unpacking the temporality and polyphony of language, giving it back its complexity, its profundity – does this not confer on it the power of emancipation that seems to have been taken away from it? If the domain of language is shrinking, then languages and their speakers

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<sup>8</sup> This concept is developed in *Transeuropéennes* No. 22, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> The conference proceedings were published in Casablanca, in 1998, by Les Editions Toubkal and Les Cahiers Intersignes.

<sup>10</sup> The *Vocabulaire Européen des Philosophies* (Paris, Le Seuil / Le Robert, 2004) is now being translated into Arabic, Farsi, Portuguese and English.

<sup>11</sup> This term comes up in the "Géophilosophie de l'Europe" project that was developed by Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe in Strasbourg at the start of the 1990s.

<sup>12</sup> In François Jullien, Thierry Marchaisse, Michèle Gendreau-Massaloux and Michel Prigent, "Lettre ouverte sur la politique de la traduction", in a special issue of *Esprit* "La traduction, un choix culturel", June 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes, "La Méditerranée, un tissu de traduction", in *An Alternative Gaze*, Amsterdam, European Cultural Foundation, 2007.

are being impoverished, and the sources of thinking and the imagination are being dried up. Translating means soliciting memories of language, and at the same time determining its future.

### **Why translate?**

In the Mediterranean region there is a need for more translation in all directions, consequent upon a need for a gradient towards the greatest number of ideas, works of the imagination and types of reflection. When authors are subject to any form of confinement (censorship, social control or spatial enclosure, as in the West Bank and Gaza, or an absence of internal mobility, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina), translations of their work provide them with a way out, a liberation. Translating Milan Kundera into French in 1969 meant bringing to the public's attention the author of that extraordinary novel *The Joke*, along with the unknown world of "the other Europe"; but it also meant protecting the author, and protecting the work itself. Texts, as they travel, gain freedom.

This kind of circulation, to quote a metaphor coined by Jean-Luc Nancy, produces a "placement in cultivation". In 1999, François Jullien, Thierry Marchaisse, Michèle Gendreau-Massaloux and Michel Prigent called for resistance to "a global phenomenon of detranslation". They wrote: "Translating means thinking, and vice versa. And that is so true that the absence of a 'test of foreignness' is already making itself felt in the growing standardisation of thinking."<sup>14</sup> They also added, in a proposal that could be extended to the human and social sciences as a whole: "Transporting itself from one language to another through a reconfiguration of concepts, while at the same time communicating itself, [philosophy] reworks itself, inducing in each new context effects that are always unpredictable." And what is true for research in the human and social sciences is just as true for art. Standardisation of language also brings about a standardisation of aesthetics.<sup>15</sup>

In this sense, and since time immemorial, translation has provided an extraordinary stimulus to research, and, in the Brusselspeak of the present day, to "innovation".<sup>16</sup> The Baghdadi translators of the Abbasid period were at the cutting edge of scientific research in the Arab world. In 1987, the bibliographical review *Préfaces* published an issue dealing with translation issues, in which Roshdi Rashed recalled that, during the 9th-century phase of translation from Greek to Arabic, "the translators were often eminent specialists in their field. And translation at that time was not separate from research as such. Rather than translating material in order to build up a library of ancient books, they were essentially pursuing research projects to which they were committed." And the epistemology of translation, including controversies about method and debates about terminology, was very much part of this activity.

Today, in parallel to translation enterprises backed by publishers, or by major national programmes, many philosophers, researchers, teachers, producers, artists and art critics are moving into translation – that of a phrase, a text, all or part of a work – and are thus transmitting fresh new proposals to their students, their audiences and others. Translation has a constant need for such "transmitters"; and this also goes for "Translating in the Mediterranean".

Another virtue of translation is to enrich the target language and its thinking processes. Presenting his "Ishaq Ibn Hunayn" plan in Paris, in 2006, Abdessalam Cheddadi noted that

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<sup>14</sup> In *Esprit*, June 1999.

<sup>15</sup> On this point, see the work of the art critic Salwa Mikdadi, who holds that many Arabic artists, in seeking to reach an international audience, marginalise their mother tongues in favour of English, and by the same token cut themselves off from local audiences. See [www.eurocult.org](http://www.eurocult.org), the Amman seminar of June 2007.

<sup>16</sup> 2009 will be the "European Year of Creativity and Innovation".

chronic delays in translating works into Arabic "have prevented the Arabic language, in its present state, from attaining the minimal level normally required by modern knowledge and creativity, and from being able to follow their development." And in a recent article<sup>17</sup> he added, with regard to the universe of science and technology: "In no discipline, in the Arabic language, does there exist the full set of elements required to encompass the field." Furthermore, "this being the case, there is no chance for production in scientific disciplines to blossom in Arabic."

It is not just *words* that are translated, but entire areas of thought; and translation also means working on one's own language. Mustapha Laarissa, in the course of a 2005 *Transeuropéennes* seminar entitled "Quelles politiques de traduction en Méditerranée?",<sup>18</sup> formulated this productive tension in the following way: "I am at war with my own language when I translate." The necessary renewal of languages by translation does not concern Arabic alone, though it takes on a vital character for that particular language; and Abdessalam Cheddadi insists that no successful linguistic reform has yet been carried out. Now, more than ever before, given the population movements that have resulted from the processes of globalisation, languages should be welcoming one another, and hybridising one another. At any rate, they should be more hospitable than those governments and political systems that prefer to ignore "the stranger's share".<sup>19</sup> To believe that languages must be protected from alteration, preserved and presented as immutable entities, would be tantamount to a death sentence.

Opening up spaces for translation means setting language in motion, starting with multiple sources. The fact that translations into Arabic (and other languages around the Euro-Mediterranean region) have English as their origin is not conducive to renewal. And the fact that south-south translations must pass through English or French due to a shortage of linguistic skills (which was greatly deplored by the Egyptian writer Gamal Ghitany at the 2005 seminar) also reduces the possibility of alternative viewpoints. In 2006, in Paris, Abdessalam Cheddadi linked up two things he felt the Arab world urgent needed: an ambitious translation plan and a programme for a return to the Arab cultural heritage, including that of translators and translations. And in a similar vein, at a recent meeting in Paris on translation in Europe, Yves Hersant suggested the need for a programme to study historical moments of translation in Europe. The archives of relationships to language are also those of passages and exchanges. And they are never neutral, as was shown by a recent heated dispute over a book in which a French medievalist played down the role of Arabic translators in the transmission of Greek thought.<sup>20</sup> A Mediterranean construction project would also reflect this.

Here one can clearly see the immense, fascinating challenge that libraries are facing in the contemporary world. They are at a crossroads. To begin with, they need to conduct an ambitious policy of collection (manuscripts, and also authors', artists' and publishers' papers), to make this known, and to place material that would otherwise be inaccessible or lost at the disposal of researchers and translators. They would thereby make a crucial contribution to

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<sup>17</sup> See the proceedings of the excellent conference *La Traduction des sciences humaines et sociales dans le monde arabe contemporain* (ed. Richard Jacquemond), Casablanca, Editions Fondation du Roi Abdul-Aziz and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> The seminar was organised with the cooperation of La Maison de l'Europe, Paris. It was introduced by Catherine Lalumière, and the participants included Hassan Abbas, Etienne Balibar, Fethi Benslama, Driss El Yazami, Gamal Ghitany, Rada Ivekovic, Mustapha Laarissa, Joëlle Marelli and Stephen Wright. It was moderated by Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes.

<sup>19</sup> See Kadhim Jihad Hassan *La Part de l'étranger – La Traduction de la poésie dans la culture arabe*, Arles, Actes Sud / Sindbad, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Simon Gouguenheim, *Aristote au Mont Saint-Michel*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2008.

research. The linguistic, artistic and historical riches of territories need to be seen for what they are. The library of Alexandria, for example, is a virtual depository that goes beyond the Arab language alone, taking in, among others, the ancient history of the city and the Septuagint Bible. In this respect, its role is unquestionably anchored in a territory. There is also a need for knowledge, discovery and reading to be within the reach of poor and deprived social groups, immigrants, their children, and those on the margins of cultural production. It is important not just to give a higher profile to language and culture, but also to give visibility and accessibility to translated works, and horizons in other cultures.

### **Looking afresh at libraries**

In this way, libraries could restore their connections with the high points of their history. During the Abbasid period, for example, translator-researchers came together, debated and worked in the House of Wisdom, which was also a library. All the manuscripts were to hand; all the resources were shared. And the same was true of Cordoba in the 10th century, or again the intellectual monasteries of medieval Europe. Libraries cannot, and must not, keep their archives secret, otherwise they risk negating whole societies' possibilities of self-representation. And confiscated archives are just what interest Orhan Pamuk in his novel *My Name is Red*, set in the world of the Ottoman miniaturists who served the Sultan in the late 16th century. He describes the vast treasure house of the Topkapi palace, with books heaped up alongside all sorts of gifts and plunder in total disorder and darkness, and the miniaturists dreaming about the works of the great Persian masters, but without access to the foundations of their tradition. The story reminds us that the opening of the Ottoman archives by the Turkish republic was a long and complex process.

The fact that libraries are the custodians of language archives, works of the imagination and tangled collective memories means that they are vital not only for history, but also for every possible translation enterprise, and, more generally, every enterprise of transmission. Which is why the burning of the library in Sarajevo in August 1992, with the destruction of 150,000 rare manuscripts and books belonging to the cultural heritage of the Balkans and Bosnia, can be described as an act of "memoricide".

### **"Translating in the Mediterranean": first steps**

Deficits in translation are legion, and reciprocal misunderstandings across the Mediterranean have grown continuously over the last twenty years, further reinforced by the setting up of barriers, restrictions in movement from the south to the north, and a general climate of suspicion. That the media and modern communication technologies are opening up new channels for exchanges is a paradox only in appearance.

Faced with this reality, whose true nature was brought out by the first Gulf war and the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, different organisations have become active, some working in the framework of the Barcelona Process, others focussing on the specific needs of language and its national reality in a particular domain or area. In 1995, *Transeuropéennes* began organising cultural cooperation programmes in the Mediterranean region and the Balkans, founded on discussion and research, education, translation and the dissemination of ideas and works. The aim was to draw attention to the diversity of languages, the innate complexity of cultures and the singularity of emancipation processes, while putting forward a critique of the identity-based policies that cause fragmentation and hatred of others, and of oneself. During the "Images et écrits" cultural workshop in 2006,<sup>21</sup> and following on from the work carried out since 1999 in the Mediterranean region under the title "Translating, between cultures",

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<sup>21</sup> See the report on the workshop.

*Transeuropéennes* launched a regional initiative on "translating in the Mediterranean", beginning with a detailed, event-sensitive report that envisaged a network and a strategy for coordinating current programmes and policies. The project is intended to generate dynamics of translation in the field of writing (notably literature, the human and social sciences, and the arts), the theatre, the cinema and the media. It outlines a new geography in which translation would take place, not just into Arabic, but also from Arabic into different European languages, from Arabic into other languages of the south, and from other languages of the south into Arabic. It would cover wide-ranging issues of education and distribution. Far from springing up out of nothing, this proposal finds its place among the significant moments in the history of translation, along with recent and contemporary experiments in the domain.

In the mid-1990s, the European Cultural Foundation began developing a highly promising project, "Memories of the Mediterranean".<sup>22</sup> It also helped to set up the Escuela de Traductores in Toledo, with the cooperation of *Transeuropéennes*. The Toledo project, which was inspired by the translators' school that operated there in the 12th and 13th centuries, highlighted the importance of translation between north and south, and created the basis of a regional dynamic. Its contribution to Hispano-Arabic exchanges (conferences, residencies, translations) has been significant.

Without being directly related to a Euro-Mediterranean perspective, the national programmes set up by some European countries are contributing to the effective circulation of given languages. One might mention, for example, the support provided by France's Centre National des Lettres for translation into French, and that of the Ministère des Affaires Étrangères for translation from French into other European languages, and into Arabic (the "Plan Traduire"), along with residencies such as those of the Collège International des Traducteurs in Arles, or again the programme of translation into Greek, run by the Centre National du Livre and EKEMEL in Athens, accompanied by residencies and educational programmes. Organisations such as the Bulgaria-based Next Page foundation have also made their appearance, and are opening up new lines of action.

There are numerous, long-standing projects for translation into Arabic. They must be looked at, on the one hand, in the light of the post-colonial question, as Kadhim Jihad Hassan has said,<sup>23</sup> and, on the other hand, that of the post-socialist question, which is no less important. In "Politiques publiques de traduction vers l'arabe des années 1950 à nos jours",<sup>24</sup> Richard Jacquemond discusses recent developments such as the Kalima project in Abu Dhabi and the Tunisian national translation centre. And there are in-depth approaches that also play an important role, such as that of the King Abdul Azziz Foundation, with its recent publication of an exhaustive catalogue on translation into Arabic in the human and social sciences, and other eminent cultural institutions such as the Qattan Foundation and IEMED, which, though not necessarily specialising in the field, are keen to be active in it.

This project thus starts out with the potential inherent in what already exists: planning and support programmes, the diversity of participants (political authorities, publishers, public and private universities, private foundations, publishers, translators, research groups, artists' networks). But existing initiatives on the regional level are insufficient, compartmentalised, fragmented and heterogeneous. The construction site is huge and pluralistic, both quantitatively and qualitatively. What is lacking is an overall vision, a common objective, shared methods of evaluation and agreed-on development aims.

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<sup>22</sup> Its purpose was the translation of works by major contemporary Arab authors into a number of European languages, and their publication.

<sup>23</sup> See note 18.

<sup>24</sup> In *La Traduction des sciences humaines et sociales dans le monde arabe contemporain*.

*How can a general overview emerge? What coordination strategy is required?*

Looking at inventories of existing translation flows, whatever their quality, it is clearly impossible to give an overall picture of translation in the Mediterranean region. Each inventory is governed by its own logic, and rooted in a determinate context. The data are highly dispersed. For Arabic, the King Abdul Aziz Foundation's catalogue of translation in the human and social sciences is, in its field, a valuable resource. The most general source of information, and the only one that gives a diachronic view and two-way flows (Arabic-Turkish, Turkish-Arabic, etc.) is UNESCO's Index Translationum,<sup>25</sup> which, as the organisation's representatives themselves said at a conference in December 2007, is fraught by persistent problems about updating. Few studies have been done on translation flows from Arabic into the languages of the European Union, Turkish and Hebrew, or among these languages themselves. South-south translations have not so far undergone any systematic analysis. Studies carried out by the Next Page foundation on "what Arabs read", and on translation flows from Kurdish to Arabic and Turkish, are instructive. And the French "Plan Traduire" includes a catalogue of French books translated into Arabic. For want of a more precise inventory, no equivalent of this appears to be offered by, for example, the British Council or the DAAD.

The Index Translationum, for all its shortcomings, demonstrates some strong tendencies, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. In no particular order, one might note: the low number of translations of major contemporary works of literature and human sciences, other than from English; the excessive number of translations of "core" literary works (between a third and a half of translations from Arabic into certain European languages are of the *1001 Nights*); a quantitative and qualitative break in translations from Arabic into the languages of central and western Europe after 1989 (with fewer and different texts being translated); an overabundance of religious works translated from Arabic into Turkish, and the virtual non-existence of works by contemporary Arab authors in that same language; the uneven presence of important contemporary Arab authors, other than Naguib Mahfouz, in European languages; and an almost total absence of translation from Arabic into Swedish (to take just that particular example), despite the fact that Sweden is the country that has invested most heavily in the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures.

"Constructing a knowledge society", the UNDP's 2003 report on human development in the Arab world, discussed the huge lack of translations into Arabic, and the consequences for cultural, scientific and human development in the Arab world. It caused quite a stir, and led to a good deal of debate, as was exemplified by the argument between Abdessalam Cheddadi and Richard Jacquemond at a conference in Casablanca, "La traduction des sciences humaines et sociales dans le monde arabe contemporain", in October 2007.

Apart from quantification, a more systematic report, if it is to lead to action on a broad front, should address other questions. What is translated? On whose initiative (a national translation programme, a publisher, a foundation)? Using which method, on what conditions, and with what guarantees of quality? What is the target group of a translated work, and how is it to be sold? By whom will it be read? Has it been subject to political or religious censorship? Is it on the shelves of national and/or academic libraries, or (if they exist) municipal libraries? How is it distributed by bookshops? How do readers receive it? How do the media feature it (if indeed they do so)? Economic and social factors are also important. What are the translation costs (royalties and payments to translators)? What is the status of translators?

There is a need for indicators in the drawing up of such reports, which will certainly contribute to producing a clearer picture of Euro-Mediterranean cultural relations in general.

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<sup>25</sup> [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

They will be used to showcase the existing situation, to compensate for insufficiencies, to produce analyses and supply overall viewpoints in regional contexts. They will make it easier to identify central tendencies in particular regions, and, for a given country and/or language, to provide a focus on existing needs in specific local contexts.

Carried out in complete independence, and with the general interest always in view, this kind of report, constantly re-evaluated, will underpin the "Translating in the Mediterranean" project, permanently asking the questions, "What is to be translated?", and "How is one to translate?", and again "For whom is one to translate?"

There is little doubt about the importance of flexible coordination for existing public and private translation programmes, as Gamal Ghitany said with regard to Arabic,<sup>26</sup> or about the need for consultation within informal networks. But there are also questions as to the aims of such coordination efforts, what they imply (notably in terms of education and distribution), and how they should be run in order to achieve the maximal amount of participation.

The question of greater financial assistance for translation should also be tackled, given the current situation. In relation to books, it can easily be transposed onto other facets of the "Translating in the Mediterranean" project that will not be discussed during the conference in Marseille. Who finances translation today? Who makes decisions about it? Is the financing body also the decision-maker? How is the publisher's autonomy to be preserved? Is support conditional on quality standards? Can common quality criteria be established? Is support for translation accompanied by support for distribution? Are royalties taken into account? How are conditions for the payment of royalties in the European Union to be harmonised with those in the Union's partner countries? On the Euro-Mediterranean level, is it advisable to set up separate funds to support translation; and if so, what should the priorities be? Should there be encouragement for a plurality of initiatives that will also function as promoters of freedom? What should be the role of the "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean"? How should Euro-Mediterranean approaches be articulated with existing initiatives in the Gulf region, and what mechanisms might be used to bring on board the Balkan countries, including the former Yugoslavia, which were traditionally receptive to translation?

#### *Translators – those irreplaceable transmitters*

Let us talk about translators... Who are they? How are they trained? What is the added value of specialised academic study in the field of translation? How are translators to achieve the conditions they need to do their job properly? Is it necessary to develop, systematically, occasions for encounters, translation workshops, or indeed pilot training schemes? Are there ways of developing communities of translators who can fully participate in the dynamics of projects? What is the role of informal translation, which is vital to research, and to cultural and scientific life, but also to social ties? How is translation to be promoted in everyday terms, in the media, in cities, in civil society, where it is clear that globalised concepts denote divergent, if not contradictory, interpretations of reality?

#### *Issues of critical thinking*

The "Translating in the Mediterranean" project can obviously go farther into the possibilities of translation and exchange. And it could also, at regular intervals, constitute a platform for evaluation and forward thinking. It will identify untranslatabilities, and ways to act on them, to study the effects of translation on works and their distribution, on the transformation of thinking, on the renewal of creativity. In the light of the contemporary situation, it could mobilise the resources required for re-translation (that of a work, or an

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<sup>26</sup> During the seminar "Quelles politiques de traduction en Méditerranée?" (see Note 17).

author), but could also give rise to ideas about the place of the contemporary in translation. It could produce crossovers between the different disciplines and fields of practice. And one of its priorities would be to stimulate interest in the problem of breaks in the different currents of translation, and their consequences for thinking, research and aesthetics.

But a cohesive, methodical project for encouraging translation can only make sense if the translated texts find an audience – on stage, if we are talking about the theatre, or in poetry, in bookshops, classrooms, lecture theatres and libraries. A shortage of time during the conference in Marseille means that only the role of libraries will be analysed; but other professions and sectors of activity also merit attention – publishers and booksellers (whose position has often been weakened by mutations of the written word, and its distribution), as well as teachers and the media.

### **Bringing libraries into the development and circulation of knowledge**

If one looks at the systematic collection of authors', translators' and publishers' papers, at the means of making printed works and manuscripts available to researchers, and providing access to works present and past (originals and translations) for the largest number of people, and in the local language(s), libraries have a fundamental contribution to make to the linguistic, scientific and cultural development of towns, cities and regions. They can "open the archives"<sup>27</sup> of a culture, and its interactions with other cultures, thus increasing its legibility. And they can act as transmitters or mediators. Symbolic entities such as the library of Alexandria, with its founding myth and inspired architecture, are paradigmatic; but libraries must not allow themselves to be confined within this status alone. If they are to be places that live and breathe, they need books, manuscripts, prints, drawings, miniatures, photographs and films. But they also need an audience – rooms full of readers, exhibitions that are visited, profusion; and computers that can be used to consult other catalogues around the world. An excess of material should not be a cause of apprehension, even by political or religious authorities, despite the fact that they may impose their power of censorship on a catalogue.

A library is always a part of a context. It must take local needs into account, while also turning outwards to the wider world, with partnerships and exhibitions that bring it to the attention of the general public. It must connect with different bodies in other countries, and thus maximise knowledge about the resources available for research purposes.

The digital age offers new opportunities. The European Digital Library project, based on criteria defined by national libraries (and not just driven by a search engine), will progressively link up catalogues on line. It will provide incentives to computerise resources and make them generally available. The partnership project that was inaugurated during the Alexandria workshop in January 2008 by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the Institut du Monde Arabe dealt, in particular, with these questions. In terms of cooperation and the sharing of documentation by electronic methods, university libraries, which are among the more autonomous and flexible, are blazing a trail, for example with the "Bibliothèque de la Méditerranée" project,<sup>28</sup> which since 2006 has been developing the "Ramses" network of excellence for centres of research in the human sciences.

Apart from digital issues, the challenges facing libraries in terms of partnerships are important. Do they have common strategies when it comes to collecting and capitalising on their resources? Should they be developing joint initiatives? In what ways can regional work deal usefully with questions about target groups, access to books, reading and heritage? Can

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<sup>27</sup> The expression was used by Mustapha Laarissa in a philosophical interview with Rastko Mocnik that took place in Paris in the autumn of 2007. See [www.paris-europe.eu](http://www.paris-europe.eu)

<sup>28</sup> <http://bibmed.mmsh.univ-aix.fr>

libraries synergise their relationship with younger people?

### **In conclusion – what political framework?**

With the Paris Summit of July 2008, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership took a new turn. The "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean" adopted a new mode of governance, taking as its priority the development of economic and environmental projects which, while broad in scope, had in most cases already been integrated into the priorities of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Apart from the idea of a Euro-Mediterranean University, the Paris Summit did not concern itself with culture. But it is impossible to know if this absence is to be merely temporary, and if culture will at some stage be given new operational frameworks.

The Anna Lindh Foundation is now embarking on the next phase in its development, with a new team and a redefinition of its programmes. Its activities will in all likelihood follow on from the conclusions and recommendations put forward in Athens in 2008 by the Euro-Mediterranean ministers of culture, who expressed their intention to develop concrete, structuring projects, with an insistence on equality in the conditions of exchange. In a joint statement, they observed that "translation, in that it creates relationships between languages and cultures, and opens up access to works and ideas, is essential to intercultural dialogue, and in this respect must be taken seriously by partner States, as well as by the European Union."<sup>29</sup> In keeping with this viewpoint, the ministers adopted "A Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Strategy", aimed at "allowing citizens to appropriate their Euro-Mediterranean heritage". In 2010, a Euro-Mediterranean cultural strategy is to be laid out, and translation, after a long absence, will be a part of it, in line with the decisions taken in Athens. This being said, the hundreds of millions of people concerned by the strategy may well see it as representing just one more airy declaration of intention.

The point of departure chosen by the Euro-Mediterranean ministers of culture coincided with events whose repercussions should not be overlooked. In the first instance, the choice of Marseille as the European capital of culture for 2013 will provide an historic opportunity not just for the city itself, the Bouches-du-Rhône department and the Provence-Côte-d'Azur region, but also for the entire Mediterranean area, with an invitation to a voyage for citizens, artists, inspiration and concepts.

Then there is the new dynamic that has emerged, with the European Commissioner for Multilingualism, Leonard Orban, insisting on a recognition of the diversity and richness of languages in Europe. This should also be central to the Union's external policies, in a vision of multilingualism that has been expressed by Amin Maalouf, who, as the president of a group of intellectuals concerned with intercultural dialogue, has suggested that every citizen should practise "an adoptive personal language" as well as his or her native language and English. The conference on multilingualism in Paris on 26 September 2008 launched an appeal for a "European programme for translation", which in fact some intellectuals had long been advocating. The conference formalised this appeal in a text that borrowed Jacques Derrida's apt expression "more than one language".<sup>30</sup>

But given that Europe is grappling with other worlds, and that other worlds are in turn grappling with Europe, no one is going to accept a Eurocentric vision of translation, or a logic of cooperation founded on power relationships between the centre and the periphery. Translation is played out in divergence, at the edges, and in reciprocities of passage.

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<sup>29</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/euromed/docs/culture\\_concl\\_0508\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/docs/culture_concl_0508_en.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> See [www.plus-dune-langue.eu](http://www.plus-dune-langue.eu), "Plus d'une langue: pour une politique européenne de la traduction". The appeal can be signed on line.