

XII. Translating Literature from the Axis of Evil

In Literature From the “Axis of Evil:” Writing from Iran, Iraq, North Korea, and Other Enemy Nations, our groundbreaking first anthology, *Words without Borders* offers American readers a passport into the heart of enemy nations and uncovers a dazzling cross-section of humanity, different from, yet ultimately recognizable to ourselves.

Literature from the “Axis of Evil” includes twenty-one works of fiction and poetry from seven countries, most translated into English for the first time. The authors in this anthology include Houshang Moradi-Kermani, Tirdad Zolghadr, Ahmad Shamlou (from Iran); Salah Al-Hamdani, Sherko Fatah, Muhsin Al-Ramli, Saadi Yousef (from Iraq); Kang Kwi-mi, Hong Seok-jung, Lim Hwa-won, Byungu Chon (from North Korea); Salim Barakat, Hanna Mina (from Syria); Kamel al-Maghur, Ashur Etwebi (from Libya); Tarek Eltayeb (from Sudan); Anna Lidía Vega Serova, Francisco García González, and Raúl Rivero (from Cuba).

“Reading *Literature from the “Axis of Evil”* inevitably makes you think about whether art and literature can help prevent hatred and even war.” —*San Francisco Chronicle*

“The book every American should read this year . . . *Axis of Evil* has more to say about the historical complexities, conflicts, and nuances of so-called enemy nations than a hundred shelves of polemics and political rhetoric that

clutter the front rows of our bookstores.” —*Bloomsbury Review*

<http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/books/literature-from-the-axis-of-evil-writing-from-iran-iraq-north-korea-and-oth>

“The governments might be considered quote unquote the enemy, but definitely not the people. These stories and poems offer an alternate view, which is very different from the politicized and polarized view of these nations.” —Azar Nafisi, author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*.

Subject of a full-length segment on Morning Edition when it first appeared in hardcover, *Literature from the “Axis of Evil”* quickly went to the top of the Amazon bestseller list. Its publication was celebrated by authors including Azar Nafisi and Alice Walker, and the *Bloomsbury Review* named it a “book of the year.”

In thirty-five works of fiction and poetry, writers from countries Americans have not been allowed to hear from—until the Treasury Department revised its regulations recently—offer an invaluable window on daily life in “enemy nations” and humanize the individuals living there. The book includes works from Syria, Libya, the Sudan, Cuba, as well as from Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. As editor Alane Mason writes in the introduction, “Not knowing what the rest of the world is thinking and writing is both dangerous and boring.”

<http://thenewpress.com/books/literature-from-axis-of-evil>

Reading Guidelines:

Readers in general and translators in particular should be very much mindful of titles. Titles are given special care by writers. In order to win the attention of their readers, writers create titles which are both interesting and captivating.

Q.I Give the exact meaning of the following words first in English and second in Arabic: axis, groundbreaking, anthology, uncovers, inevitably, chronicle, nuances, polemics, clutter, polarized.

Q.II Derive as many words as you can from the following words: offers, recognizable, prevent, conflicts, considered, celebrated, regulations, invaluable, editor, introduction.

Q.III Give the opposites of the words below and use them in good English sentences of your own: evil, enemy, includes, prevent, front, quickly, top, allowed, humanize, boring.

Q.IV Answer the following questions briefly:

1. Who created the ugly term "Axis of Evil"? When and what was the occasion? Why?
2. What are the other countries included in the axis as does the anthology shows?
3. Can art and literature help prevent hatred and war?
4. Why should the book be read by every American?
5. How does the book offer an alternate view?
6. Who are Azar Nafisi and Alice Walker?
7. Did the Treasury Department sanction the translation of literature from enemy states?
8. Do you agree with Alain Mason's viewpoint or not?

Q.V Transliterating personal names is problematic and obliges us to be very systematic in. Translate paragraph 2 giving due care to rendering the Arabic names back to Arabic.

Research Activity:

Censoring and banning the translation of books is a bidirectional process. Can you think of any foreign books which were disallowed to be translated into Arabic?

Quote of the Day:

A translation in verse . . . seems to me something absurd, impossible— Victor Hugo