

## **Arab Identity and Literature in Translation: The Politics of Selection and Representation**

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### **Abstract**

Literature is an invaluable tool in understanding various aspects of the cultural, social and political processes associated with the Arab drive for modernization. This paper explores representations of Arab identity by examining historical and contemporary Arabic literary works and the processes of translation into European languages they have undergone. It first details the emergence of Arab literature during the Islamic era from late 700 AC to the end of the Abbasid Dynasty, before examining Arabic-language literature, and especially the literature produced by female authors, in more recent times. The nature of Arabic works translated into European languages for Western readers is also discussed with a particular focus on the politics of selection and representation associated with these texts. The paper concludes by discussing both the potential negative impact that translation may have on conceptualizations of Arabs and Arab identities and the potential of translated works to offer deep insight into various aspects of life in the many and diverse countries and territories of the Arab world.

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