

The 2021 Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation



SARAH ENANY wins the 2021 Prize

“A unanimous choice for the excellence and readability of both its original and translated versions”



The 2021 Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation is awarded to Sarah Enany for her translation of the novel *The Girl with Braided Hair* by Rasha Adly, published by Hoopoe Fiction. Following the shortlist of five titles that was announced on 23 November 2021, the judges are unanimous in naming Sarah Enany as the winner of the £3,000 prize, to be awarded by the Society of Authors on 10 February 2022.

The [judges](#) in this 16th year of the Prize comprised Roger Allen (Chair), Professor Emeritus of Arabic & Comparative Literature, University of Pennsylvania; Rosemarie Hudson, Founder Publisher, HopeRoad Publishing; Ronak Hosni, Professor of Arabic and Translation Studies at the American University of Sharjah; and Caroline McCormick, Director, Achates.

THE WINNER: SARAH ENANY**for her translation of *The Girl with Braided Hair* by Rasha Adly (Egypt)****THE JUDGES' REPORT**

This year's winner of the Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize is Rasha Adly's novel *Shaghaf* (Passion), superbly translated into English by Sarah Enany as *The Girl with Braided Hair*. Dedicated by its author "to everyone who has been defeated by life or had their dreams broken", it is a wonderful combination of art and history, of contemporary Egypt and its 18th-century past, as it recounts the stories of two women. In the modern era, Yasmine embarks on some research in order to find out the history of a painting of a beautiful woman, that is unsigned and that she is helping to restore. After a good deal of research, it turns out to be the work of Alton German, a French artist and writer who accompanied Napoleon on his invasion of Egypt in 1798.

In this narrative, skilfully segmented into its two time frames, the reader is taken back to the earlier period and provided with both a vivid picture of the ruthlessness of the French invasion and, reflecting the original Arabic title, the infatuation that the painter feels for Zeinab, the subject of his painting. Zeinab, the lovely daughter of a prominent sheikh at the Al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo, has attracted the attention of Napoleon himself and risks alienation from her own family by responding to the flattering attentions of such foreigners and their very different cultural values and behaviour.

The judges were all impressed by the skill with which the author dexterously combines history, art, passion, and politics in the different but connected stories of these two Egyptian women, each story line being subdivided into multiple segments, frequently prefaced by specific dates, whether 1798 or 2012. The resulting narrative – a multi-textured story of love, war, and the ruthlessness and privileges of the invader – draws the reader into its two eras and worlds, as the quest for information about the portrait and its artist is interspersed with historical detail about Napoleon's invasion and its impact on Egypt, Cairene society, and on Zeinab herself. The subtle and beautifully crafted translation faithfully echoes the style of the author.

Sarah Enany's highly accomplished translation was praised by the judges for its accuracy and its ability to combine the two separate narratives into a seamless text that is a pleasure to read. In the words of one judge: "I was looking for a gem, and I found it in *The Girl with Braided Hair*."

The judges discussed the other four shortlisted works, notable contributions to Arabic fiction in high-quality translation, but they were unanimous in their choice of Adly's novel for the excellence and readability of both its original and translated versions.

**ABOUT THE WINNING TRANSLATION *The Girl with Braided Hair*
Reactions from the translator, the author and the publisher**

Translator Sarah Enany said:

"I'm thrilled that my translation of Rasha Adly's *The Girl with Braided Hair* has won this year's prestigious Banipal Prize. I'm very grateful to Hoopoe Books and the AUC Press for giving me this opportunity, and to the judges for their kind words about the translation. I hope this award will encourage English-language readers to enjoy this richly detailed and poignant novel."

Author Rasha Adly wrote:

"I am very happy to hear this good news. Thank you to the judges, thank you to the administration of the award, and congratulations to Sarah Enany."

Nadine El-Hadi, Acquisitions Editor of [Hoopoe Fiction](#), said:

"We are delighted that Sarah Enany's impressive skill as a translator has been recognized with this prestigious prize. She deserves great commendation for her translation of Rasha Adly's intricate and rich novel *The Girl with Braided Hair* into eloquent, vivid English, and we are proud to have been the novel's publisher in translation."

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Sarah Enany is a literary translator and an Assistant Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Cairo University. She has translated a number of works by writers such as Yusuf Idris, Mohamed Salmawy, and Ahmed Aboul Gheit (*Witness to War and Peace: Egypt, the October War, and Beyond*), and is best known until now for her translation of the three novels of Kamal Ruhayyim's 'Galal trilogy', all published by AUC Press: *Diary of a Jewish Muslim* (2014), *Days in the Diaspora* (2012), and *Menorahs and Minarets* (2017). She also translated Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* into colloquial Egyptian Arabic.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rasha Adly is an Egyptian writer, born in Cairo in 1972. She is a researcher and freelance lecturer in the history of art, and is Cairo correspondent for the Emirates *Culture* magazine. Her writing career began with a blog in 2007, and she published her first novel, *Sakhab al-Samt* (The Clamour of Silence), in 2010. She is the author of eight novels, of which *Shaghaf* (2017) was longlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2018 and is published in English translation as *The Girl with Braided Hair*. Her novel *Akhir Ayyam al-Basha* (The Last Days of the Pasha) was longlisted for the 2020 International Prize for Arabic Fiction.



ABOUT THE BOOK

***The Girl with Braided Hair* by Rasha Adly (Egypt)**

Published by Hoopoe Fiction (imprint of AUC Press), November 2020.

ISBN 9789774169878. Pbk. 324 pages. £14.18.

eBook/Kindle. £10.62

“I was looking for a gem, and I found it in *The Girl with Braided Hair*.”

Set across two time frames, this novel masterfully weaves together the stories of two remarkable Egyptian women, one in the present day, and one at the turbulent close of the 18th century. When art historian Yasmine comes across the captivating portrait of a young woman from the Napoleonic era in Egypt, she is driven to uncover the mysterious circumstances of its creation. Meanwhile, Zeinab, the striking beauty from the painting, finds herself seduced by the glamour and prestige of the French elite in Cairo, setting her on a dangerous course which could ultimately alienate her from the society and culture she knows. Adly skilfully draws the reader into these two very different yet intertwined worlds in this rich tale of history, art, war, and passion.

CELEBRATING THE AWARD



The Translation Prizes Award Ceremony, hosted by the Society of Authors, will take place [online on 10 February 2022, 6.00pm GMT](#), and will award the following eight prizes: the Bernard Shaw Prize (Swedish), the Goethe-Institut Award (German), the Premio Valle Inclán Prize (Spanish), the Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize (Arabic), the Schlegel-Tieck Prize (German), the Scott Moncrieff Prize (French), the Translators’ Association First Translation Prize (debut translation from any language into English), and the Vondel Prize (Dutch).



The Banipal Trust for Arab Literature’s celebration of the 2021 Winner takes place the following week, also [online, on Thursday 17 February at 5.00pm GMT](#), in partnership with Arts Canteen, where winning translator Sarah Enany and her author Rasha Adly will be in conversation with Chair of Judges Prof Roger Allen, along with readings in both languages and a Q&A session.

For information about the award, visit this link:

<https://www.banipaltrust.org.uk/prize/award2021>

NOTES TO EDITORS

- For digital images of Sarah Enany, Rasha Adly, the front cover image of *The Girl with Braided Hair* and the Prize logo, click [here](#)
- To arrange an interview with Sarah Enany, or for any other information, email Clare Roberts on admin@banipaltrust.org.uk.

ABOUT THE SAIF GHOBASH BANIPAL PRIZE FOR ARABIC LITERARY TRANSLATION

The prize is an annual award of £3,000, made to the translator(s) of a published translation in English of a full-length imaginative and creative Arabic work of literary merit published after, or during, the year 1967 and first published in English translation in the year prior to the award. The prize aims to raise the profile of contemporary Arabic literature, as well as to honour the important work of individual translators in bringing the work of established and emerging Arab writers to the attention of the wider world. It was the first prize in the world for published Arabic literary translation into English and was established by *Banipal*, the magazine of modern Arab literature in English translation, and the Banipal Trust for Arab Literature. The inaugural prize was awarded on 9 October 2006 to the late Humphrey Davies.

The prize is administered by the Society of Authors in the United Kingdom, alongside the other UK prizes for literary translation, from languages that include Dutch, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Spanish, and Swedish. The prizes are awarded annually at a ceremony hosted by the Society of Authors.

The prize is wholly sponsored by Omar Saif Ghobash and his family in memory of his father, the late Saif Ghobash, who was passionate about Arabic literature and other literatures of the world.

The deadline for both entries and publication of works each year is 31 March.

MORE LINKS

For further history of the prize, more information about entries, judges, rules, administration, and any other details, please go to:

<https://www.banipaltrust.org.uk/prize/>

<https://www.banipaltrust.org.uk/rules/>

<https://societyofauthors.org/Prizes/Translation-Prizes>

<https://societyofauthors.org/Prizes/Translation-Prizes/Saif-Ghobash-Banipal>

Social media links:

<https://www.facebook.com/SaifGhobashBanipalPrize/>

<https://twitter.com/banipalprize>