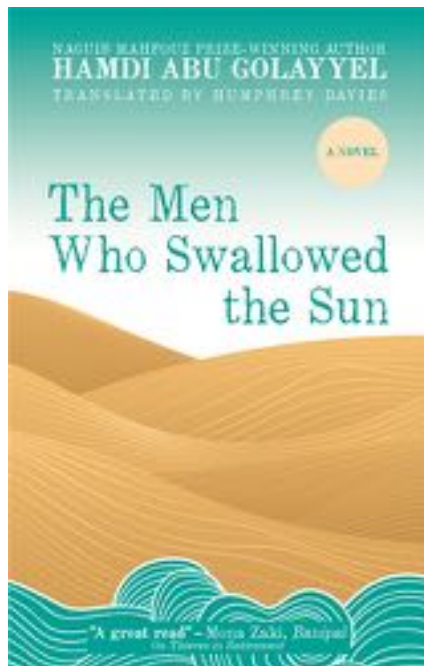


## The 2022 Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation



**Announcing joint winners**

**HUMPHREY DAVIES and ROBIN MOGER**



The 2022 Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation is to be shared between two joint winners:

- the late **HUMPHREY DAVIES** for his translation of *The Men Who Swallowed the Sun* by Hamdi Abu Golayyel, published by Hoopoe Fiction
- **ROBIN MOGER** for his translation of *Slipping* by Mohamed Kheir, published by Two Lines Press.

The judges in this 17th year of the Prize were:

**Charis Olszok** (Chair), Associate Professor, Modern Arabic Literature,  
University of Cambridge

**Katharine Halls**, translator of fiction & plays, joint winner of 2017 Sheikh  
Hamad Translation Award

**Susheila Nasta** MBE, Wasafiri magazine founder, Professor Emerita Queen  
Mary College & the Open University, Royal Society of Literature Council  
Member, Honorary Fellow, the English Association

**Becki Maddock**, Banipal Trustee, toponymist, linguist, translator, Royal  
Geographical Society Fellow.

For more information about the judges click [here](#).

## **THE JUDGES' REPORT**

A joint award seemed the best way to honour two extremely strong novels which each distinguished themselves in different ways: *Slipping* for its elegance and flow, and *The Men Who Swallowed the Sun* for the impressive skill and creativity involved in tackling such a dense and complex text written in non-standard Arabic.

Published in Arabic in 2018, the novels represent exciting new directions in Arabic literature, both through their divergencies and their surprising synergies, unearthing forgotten, baffling, and painfully absurd histories, broaching the topic of illegal migration, and doing so through narrators who upset, challenge, and force their reader to see the world anew.

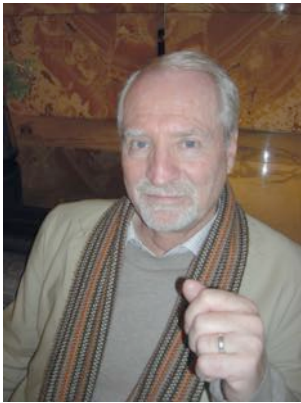
## **JOINT WINNER – HUMPHREY DAVIES for his translation of**

*The Men Who Swallowed the Sun* by Hamdi Abu Golayyel (Hoopoe Fiction)

### **Hugh Davies, brother of the late Humphrey Davies, wrote on learning of the news:**

“I was thrilled to receive the news that my beloved younger brother, Humphrey, is the joint winner of the 2022 Saif Ghobash Banipal Arabic Literary Translation prize. As a non-Arabist I had not fully appreciated till organising Humphrey’s memorials in London and Cairo in March last year how distinguished a scholar he was in the field. From a standing start in 1965 with a scholarship to Jesus College, Cambridge to read English (a subject swiftly abandoned as ‘sterile’ for him) he went on to achieve a 1st in Arabic studies in 1968. Thenceforward the Arabic language and its literature became his passion. But only in the last twenty-five years was he able to devote himself to translation which was prolific and ranged from classical texts and on down the centuries to contemporary novels. The family and I are delighted that he has, again, been recognised for his translation work by the Saif Ghobash Banipal Trust.”

## ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR



**Humphrey Davies (1947–2021)** was twice before the winner of the Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation (in 2006 and 2010 – the first and fifth years of the prize) and twice runner-up (in 2010 and 2012), as well as being a judge for the 2013 prize, which has been only other time joint winners have been announced. He started translating in 1997, with his first translation, a short story *Rat* by Sayed Ragab, being published in *Banipal 14* in 2002. He has translated some thirty book-length works from Arabic, including *The Yacoubian Building* by Alaa Al Aswany.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



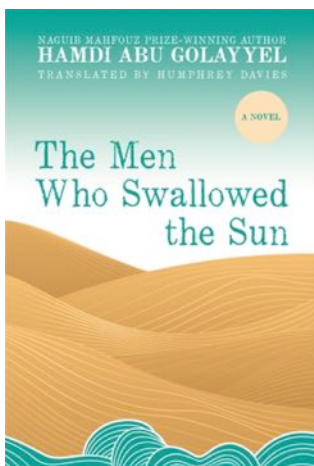
**Hamdi Abu Golayyel**, born in Fayoum, Egypt, in 1967, is a writer and a journalist. He is the author of numerous short story collections and novels, including *Thieves in Retirement* and *A Dog with No Tail*, which was awarded the 2018 Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature. He is editor-in-chief of the Popular Studies series, which specializes in folklore research, and writes for Arabic news outlets, such as *al-Ittihad* and *al-Safir*.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

### The Men Who Swallowed the Sun

Published by Hoopoe Fiction (imprint of AUC Press), (1 March 2022)

Pbk: ISBN 9781649030948 • 216 pp • £11.99 / \$18.95. Hbk: ISBN 9781649031990 • 216 pp • £43.80 / \$52.99. eBook: ISBN 9780815655398 • £10.66 / \$17.84



Hamdi Abu Golayyel's *The Men Who Swallowed the Sun* is a harsh, gritty tale of migration in pursuit of a better life, switching between registers of Arabic through the intimate and irreverent voice of its narrator, as we move from Egypt's Western Desert to Sabha in the South of Libya, across the Mediterranean to Italy. The novel has overtones of the Arabic oral epic and of the picaresque, through which it traces marginal, forgotten, and uncomfortable histories with sly wit. The richness of the language stretches from the nuances of dialect, proverbs, and colloquialisms, to clever wordplay within Modern Standard Arabic. Humphrey Davies handles this richness with aplomb, conveying the narrator's chattiness and scattered thoughts, alongside moments of fraught action, and shifts to historical and personal memories.

It is a magnificent achievement to have brought this novel to English with such flair. The cultural specificities and idiosyncrasies of the original are conveyed, while the translation remains a gripping and vivid read thanks to Davies's profound knowledge of Arabic, and creative talent in finding solutions to the most demanding challenges.

\* \* \*

## **JOINT WINNER – ROBIN MOGER**

*Slipping* by Mohamed Kheir (Two Lines)

### **Reactions from the author and the translator**

#### **Author Mohamed Kheir wrote:**

“There are many reasons for my feeling of happiness that *Slipping* has won the prize – it is my first work translated into English, it was done with great effort by the wonderful Robin Moger, and with great care by Two Lines Press. Just to be shortlisted was great, so nothing can describe my happiness at winning the award and Robin getting the recognition he deserves. Hopefully it will lead to many more readers of *Slipping*, and who knows, to its translation into even more languages. Thank you.”

#### **Translator Robin Moger said:**

“I’m really delighted that Mohamed Kheir’s *Slipping* has won the translation prize alongside Humphrey Davies’s translation of the wonderful *The Men who Swallowed the Sun* by Hamdi Abu Golayyel: a pair of magical, strange and exciting narratives that make the happiest bedfellows. I hope this leads more people to read more of both of these authors. Many thanks to the wonderful Two Lines Press, in particular the book’s editor CJ Evans, for making this translation a thing in the world and for making it so beautifully. But the most thanks, of course, go to Mohamed.”

## **ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR**



**Robin Moger** is an award-winning translator of contemporary Arabic prose and poetry into English, currently based in Cape Town, South Africa. He won the Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize in 2017 for his translation of *The Book of Safety* by Yasser Abdel Hafez (Hoopoe Fiction 2017). His translations of fiction and prose works include *The Book of Sleep* by Haytham El Wardany (Seagull Books, 2020), Iman Mersal’s *How To Mend: Motherhood and its Ghosts* (Kayfa ta, 2018), Yasser Abdellatif’s *The Law of Inheritance* (Seagull Books, 2018), *All The Battles* by Maan Abu Taleb (Hoopoe Fiction, 2017), Nael Eltoukhy’s *The Women of Karantina* (AUC Press) and Youssef Rakha’s *The Crocodiles* (7 Stories Press, 2014).



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



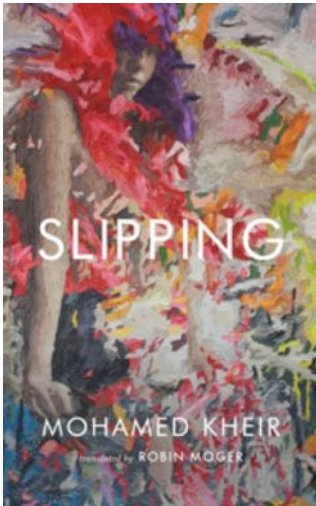
**Mohamed Kheir** is a novelist, poet, short story writer, journalist, and lyricist. His short story collections *Remsh Al Ein* (2016) and *Afarit Al Radio* (2011) both received The Sawiris Cultural Award, and *Leil Khargi* (2001) was awarded the Egyptian Ministry of Culture Award for poetry. *Slipping (Eflat Al Asabea)*, Kotob Khan Publishing House, 2018; Two Lines Press, 2021) is his second novel and his first to be translated into English. He lives in Egypt.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

### Slipping

Two Lines Press (8 June, 2021)

Pbk: ISBN 9781949641165 • 187 pp • £14.63 / \$16.95. eBook • £8.95 / \$9/49



In *Slipping*, a journalist, Seif, is taken on a surreal, disturbing, yet incandescent tour of Egypt to witness events and sights magical and impossible. In the wake of the Arab Spring, the journey shifts from exterior to interior, exploring Seif's past; his relationships, disappointments, and traumas. The result is a ghostly tour, shifting between life and death, and reality and imagination. Kheir's first novel to be translated into English, *Slipping* provides a stunning introduction for Anglophone readers to this poet, short story writer, and novelist. Robin Moger's translation captures the sense of movement and electric aliveness of the original. Each image of this enigmatic, vivid, and captivating novel shimmers in English as it does in Arabic, through Moger's rendering of Kheir's economic and poetic brilliance. The clamour of the city resounds alongside the surreal quiet, as the novel slips between genres and voices,

between absurdity, dystopia, and the sublime. Moger captures this slippage, alongside the melancholy of the original, and the moments of sharp, sweet humour.

## CELEBRATING THE AWARD

This follows the shortlist announcement on 1 December 2022. The award of £3,000 will be divided equally between Humphrey Davies's estate and Robin Moger and will be awarded by the Society of Authors, the administrator of the prize.



The Translation Prizes Award Ceremony, hosted by the Society of Authors, will take place on 8 February 2023 at the British Library, and will award the following prizes: the Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize (Arabic), the Scott Moncrieff Prize (French), the Schlegel-Tieck Prize (German), the TLS-Risa Domb/Porjes Prize (Hebrew), the John Florio Prize (Italian),

the Premio Valle Inclán (Spanish), and the Translators' Association First Translation Prize (debut translation from any language into English).



The Banipal Trust for Arab Literature's celebration of the 2022 joint winners takes place the following day, an online event on Thursday 9 February at 6.00pm GMT owing to the participants being unable to travel to London. It will comprise a discussion along with readings in both languages and a Q&A session.

This link will be updated with all information about the award and event:

<https://www.banipaltrust.org.uk/prize/award2022>

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### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- For digital images of Humphrey Davies, Hamdi Abu Golayyel, the front cover image of *The Men Who Swallowed the Sun*, and of Robin Moger, Mohamed Kheir, the front cover image of *Slipping*, and the Prize logo, click [here](#).
- To arrange an interview with either of the publishers or authors or with Robin Moger, or for any other information, email [admin@banipaltrust.org.uk](mailto: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 the Ghobash family in memory of their 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**

about the prize, past winners, entries, judges, rules, administration, and any other details:

<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>