Case Study

Ideological Manipulation of Translation through Translator's Comments: A Case Study of Barks' Translation of Rumi's Poetry

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ABSTRACT

As purposefully crafted information around a text, paratext is a critical platform for ideological manipulation in translation. Translators' comments as a form of paratext can cause ideological deviations between source and target texts that diminish the ideological context of the source text. On this ground, this study aimed to explore translators' comments and how they can subtly recontextualize the ideology of texts and reframe them in new ideological contexts. Thus, choosing Coleman Barks' translations of Rumi's poetry as a case study. It aimed to probe the congruency of Rumi's ideology with the ideology embedded in the translator's comments on the verses. The study employed critical discourse analysis as its analytical methodology and explored the collected controversial examples of the translator's comments. The findings illustrated a high level of ideological deviation between the source and target texts. Moreover, the findings implied the translator's dominant approach toward a text from an inferior language comparing the superior English language. It has shown that ideological fidelity in translation is not only confined to texts but includes paratexts as well. The present study can be considered significant as it revealed the de-Islamization trend of a Middle Eastern text in the light of the relationship of the unequal languages. The study suggests that paratexts as an empowering platform for translators effectively direct the readers' perception

about the source text and its author. This study hopes to make the translator trainees more cautious in their comments on the original authors' voices and ideology.

INTRODUCTION

Apart from the traditional perception of translation, which has dealt with linguistic and textual fidelity, more contemporary translation studies have paid special attention to the ideological aspects of the text. The ideological concerns have become more controversial when the source text's ideology does not match the target readers' social context and dominant ideology. On this matter, it has been found that not only the response of readers to a translation would be better, but publication efforts would be more comfortable when the ideology present in a translation is on the same wavelength as the dominant ideology of the society (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014). Thus, one of the concerns of the ideological studies of translation is investigating ideological congruency between the source and target texts in terms of any probable ideological deviations. For this reason, the present case study was derived from the attention and significance of a contemporary phenomenon–the extraordinary fascination of North American society towards the translations of Rumi (a Muslim Sufi Sheikh from 800 years ago who used poetry to transmit the Qur'anic teachings).

The beginning of the twenty-first century in North America was accompanied by the rapid dissemination of a wave of fascination towards Rumi's poetry and beliefs. In the last two decades, Coleman Barks' translations of Rumi's poetry "have been the best-selling poetry (of any kind) in North America" (Mojaddedi, 2017, p. 56). According to Tolib (2019), Barks' English renderings of Rumi's poetry have been translated into twenty-three collections, a substantial number that shows the significance of his work. Moreover, Ciabattari (2014) specified that by 2014 over two million copies of his translations have been sold globally. This rapid growth of Rumi's fame and the popularity of Barks' renderings of his poetry in North America is contemplated as an unexpected phenomenal occurrence, especially after the 9/11 attacks and the rise of anti-Islam emotions throughout the nation. The long fascination with Rumi's poetry in North America, even in the Islamophobic context after 9/11, rose many disputes. Researchers in translation studies, literature and even theology have been attracted to the subject which Safavi and Weightman (2009) called "Rumi-Mania". On this topic, we can consider several researchers that have explored this matter, such as Tolib (2019), Mojaddedi (2007), Minnick (2016), Azadibouga and Patton (2015), and Lewis (2014), to name but a few.

As stated above, Coleman Barks has published more than twenty-three translation collections of Rumi's poetry which have received a favourable response from North American society. Some scholars

like Minnick (2016) believed that Barks "through his translation and his poetry is creating a connection between the past and the present moment" (p. 295). Nevertheless, another group of scholars insisted that the translator recontextualise these translations in a New-Age framework. This second group believes Barks separated Rumi from the Islamic context of his poetry and presented him (Rumi) as either a spiritual guru or a love poet (Aviv, 2007; Lewis, 2014; Naghmeh-Abbaspour et al., 2019). The "Rumi phenomenon" (El-Zein, 2000) was inspected from various perspectives; however, to the best of our knowledge, little effort has been made to investigate these translations at the paratextual level. Considering the general peripheral position of translated literature, in particular, translated poetry in the literary system (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998; Hermans, 2014), and regarding the noted unusual trend of the fascination of North American poetry readers toward collections of Rumi's poetry translated by Coleman Barks, the very first sparks of this study have been generated. Besides, some earlier studies illustrated that Barks, by removing the Islamic concepts from the text, performed a critical ideological manipulation at the lexical levels (Azadibougar & Patton, 2015; Naghmeh-Abbaspour et al., 2019). On this ground, the current study aimed to examine the ideological shifts of Barks' translations at the paratextual level, in particularly through the translator's comments. Translators' comments as a form of external guidance can be considered as

"an example of text-external manipulation as conscious handling … [and] can also try to impress a certain ideology on the reader" (Dukate, 2009, p. 95). To be more specific, given the extent of the debate about the ideological manipulations of Barks' translations of Rumi, there is a significant lack of investigation on the congruency of the translator's ideology presented in his comments and the original ideology of Rumi's poetry.

Therefore, to fill this void, the current research explores the translator's comments on Rumi's ideology and how the translator introduced him to the new potential audience. Furthermore, the present study focused on the paratextual material (e.g., prefaces, notes, interviews) to illustrate the power of such extra-textual material in redirecting the ideology of the text in line with the target society values.

Depicting the concept of paratext, Batchelor (2018) defined it as "a consciously crafted threshold for a text which has the potential to influence the way(s) in which the text is received" (p. 142). Moreover, it is essential to note that the paratext is the message, not the physical entity (Genette, 1997). Highlighting the importance of exploring paratexts, Batchelor (2020) has further described paratext as a platform that translators employ to position themselves ideologically within a society. In the same vein, Tymoczko (1999) identified paratextual analysis as the central aspect of exploring the implicit ideological intervention of translators, whereby such paratexts like the preface, introduction, notes, and alike

function akin to a commentary on the translation. Therefore by analysing the paratextual materials, the current study aimed to highlight the impact of the translator's ideologically motivated manipulation on the text and the image of the original author in the target social context.

In line with the statements provided, the present descriptive study, which is explored the translator's comments (as a form of paratext) in ideological congruency with the original text. The emphasis here is placed on ideological manipulation, which is exerted from the dominant values and ideology of the target society. Due to the association of critical discourse analysis with ideology and manipulation concepts, the current study has employed critical discourse analysis (CDA) as its analytical methodology. The translator's ideologically controversial comments about Rumi and his poetry were collected from different sources. Ten examples of the collected comments are presented and analysed in the current study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rumi's Poetry

Mowlana Khodavandgar Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi, known as Jalal al-Din Rumi, or simply Rumi in the west, was born on September 30/1207 at Balkh, a small area in ancient Iran, which nowadays is part of Afghanistan and died in 1273 at Konya, in Asiatic Turkey (Lewis, 2014). He was born and grew up in a deeply religious family. Although, following his father and ancestors, he was supposed to be a Muslim preacher. All his higher education

was in the Islamic sciences of his day. As Geoffroy (2010) highlighted, Rumi entirely devoted his life to God and, following the example of the prophet Mohammad and by all means, surrendered to God's will. Rumi's life was entirely devoted to God and following the example of the prophet Mohammad and by all means, surrendered to God's will. Although Rumi has written a prose book on mystical discourse, he, like most of the mystics of his time, employed poetry as a pedagogic vehicle to convey the Islamic teachings to general readers. He has composed two major poetry books: Diwan e Shams e Tabrizi and Masnavi e Manavi.

Diwan e Shams e Tabrizi (The Works of Shams of Tabrizi) is named in honour of Shams, Rumi's great friend and inspiration. It contains more than 3,000 mystical odes in a spirited style, which amounted to around 40,000 lines of verse. Diwan e Sham represents Rumi's spiritual feelings while in Sema (Safavi & Weightman, 2009).

Masnavi e Manavi (The spiritual couplets), in short, is known as Masnavi, is the other Rumi's poetry book. Few books in the history of literature are read and appreciated as Rumi's *Masnavi*. *Masnavi* significantly transcended its precursors in scope, rank, and conception (Kazerooni, 2011). Everyone who reads Rumi's *Masnavi* can easily perceive the presence of *the Quran* in every tread of it. Rumi specified on the religious nature of *Masnavi*, as in the very first lines of it indicated: "This is the Book of *Masnavi*, which is the roots of the roots of the roots of religion, in respect of its unveiling the mysteries of

attainment (to the Truth) and certainty, which is the greatest science of God" (as cited in Safavi & Weightman, 2009, pp. 3-4). *Masnavi e Manavi* inspired countless commentaries in different languages and has been called 'the *Qur'an* in the Persian language' according to the common belief that it conveys the Persian essence of the mystical teachings of Islamic Holly text (Lewis, 2009). *Masnavi* is deeply rooted in Islamic philosophy. In *Masnavi*, Rumi explicitly referred to the 528 verses from *the Quran* and more than 750 traditions (hadith) related to Prophet Mohammad (Safavi & Weightman, 2009). Zamani (2010) believed that the shine and glory of *Masnavi's* general atmosphere are because of the essence of *the Quran*. Reynold A. Nicholson, the eminent orientalist and recognised scholar in Islamic and mysticism Literature, created the first critical edition of *Masnavi*, the first translation, and the first commentary on the entire work in English. Nicholson's (1934) translation highly influenced Rumi studies worldwide. *Masnavi*, in Nicholson's (1934) critical edition, in six books (chapters) of poetry, has over 25,500 verses and a total of 65,000 lines. Safavi and Weightman (2009) believe that *Masnavi* is an astonishing poetic volume by anybody's standards.

However, as Nicholson's translations are too scholarly for the general audience (Lewis, 2014), during the time, different translators tried their chance with Rumi's poetry. It seems Coleman Barks is the most successful among all. Coleman Barks, the American poet and Emeritus literature professor of the University of Georgia,

faced Rumi's poetry in 1976 for the first time when his friend, Robert Bly, showed him scholarly translations of Rumi's poetry. He told Barks, "these poems need to be released from their cages" (Barks, 1997, p. 82). However, since Barks cannot read or speak Persian, the translation process to him means paraphrasing the previous translations of Rumi, mostly by Nicholson, or the literal translations that John Moyne (a Persian linguist) provided him. Barks has published several translation collections of Rumi's poetry, such as *The Essential Rumi* (1995), *The Illuminated Rumi* (1997), *Rumi: The Book of Love* (2003), which almost all of them were highly successful in the North American context. This favourable response goes to the way that Barks' *The Essential Rumi* (1995) was announced the best seller in America:

> By 1998, three years after its publication, The Essential Rumi by Barks had sold over 110,000 copies! Any publisher would rejoice to sell this many copies of modern American poetry, but if we take into account the dozen other Rumi volumes by Barks and the dozen-odd versions of Rumi by other authors, the laurel of the best-selling poet in America with which Summer in Publishers Weekly and then Alexandra Marks in The Christian Science Monitor crowned Rumi is probably no exaggeration, even if the ultimate authority for the assertion is Coleman Barks himself. (Lewis, 2014, p. 526)

However, as mentioned earlier, this favourable response toward translations of

a pedagogical Islamic text was not usual, especially in the North American context that Islam is not an appreciated ideology. Scholars of different fields studied this unusual fascination toward Rumi's poetry from different perspectives. Almost all of them agreed that Barks recontextualisedd the text in a different ideological context (Azadibougar & Patton, 2015; El-Zein, 2000; Lewis, 2014; Naghmeh-Abbaspour et al., 2019). Some previous studies focused on Barks' ideological manipulation of Rumi's poetry revealed fascinating findings on Barks' manipulative strategies through lexical choices (Azadibougar & Patton, 2015; Naghmeh-Abbaspour et al., 2019).

As a retired literature professor who perfectly understands manipulative literary tools, Barks employed his academic knowledge to recontextualise Rumi's poetry in a new context. For instance, wherever in Rumi's texts, Barks faced the term God,

or other religious words, he either deleted the concept or replaced it with 'Love'. The following comparisons between Barks' translation and Rumi's text will clarify the point.

However, to facilitate the comparison, apart from original Persian poetry and Barks' English translation of that segment, each of the following examples in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 accompanies Nicholson's English translation of Rumi, merely as the literal translation of those specific lines:

Manipulation in Translation

Manipulation in translation is manifested in the form of what has become known as shifts. This term is used in translation studies to denote changes, which can be observed in the target text compared to the source text (Dukate, 2009). In other terms, manipulation, generally, is recognized as a form of distortion that is commonly

Table 1

Ideological manipulation through lexical choices (Example 1)

Barks' translation	Nicholson's translation (Literal translation of Rumi's poetry)
"The way is full of genuine sacrifice. The thickets blocking the path are anything that keeps you from that, any fear that you may be broken to bits like a glass bottle. This road demands courage and stamina, Yet it's full of footprints!" (Barks, 1997, p. 246)	**"The road of religion** is full of trouble and bale for the reason that it is not the road for any one whose nature is effeminate." (Nicholson, 1934, p. 61)
‏"آفتی در دفع هر جان شیشه ای‏ که نه راه هر مخنّث گوهر است‏"‏	‏"راه جان باز است و در هر بیشه ای‏ ‏**"راه دین** ز آن رو پر از شور و شر است‏

Table 2

Ideological manipulation through lexical choices (Example 2)

Barks' translation	Nicholson's translation (Literal translation of Rumi's poetry)
"Puff on **this candle,** and your face will get burned!" (Barks, 1997, p. 219)	"O old woman, (if) you puff (try to put out**)** **God's candle,** you will be burnt, you and your head at the same time, O foulmouthed one." (Nicholson, 1934, p. 237)
	"هرکه بر شمع **خدا** آرد پُفُو شمع کی میرد، بسوزد پوز او"

Table 3

Ideological manipulation through lexical choices (Example 3)

Barks' translation	Nicholson's translation (Literal translation of Rumi's poetry)
"Who am I to judge? But the question remained." (Barks, 1997, p. 219)	"Who am I, **in view of God's** exercising (absolute) control (over everything he does), that my carnal soul should raise difficulties and objections?" (Nicholson, 1934, p. 241)
که برآرد نفسِ من اِشکال و دَق"	"من که باشم با **تصرفهای حق**

presented by altering the meaning or intention of something in a way that does not correlate with the truth or " distorts the truth" (Dukate, 2009, p. 75). However, such manipulation can generally be categorised as conscious or unconscious (Farahzad, 2010) or as a form of obligatory and optional shift (Dukate, 2009). The present research has a mere focus on the conscious/optional choices, which in translation manifests as "changing of the input information in a way that makes it differ from the original and misrepresents it" (Dukate, 2009, p. 75).

Moreover, the concept of 'ideological' manipulation in translation needs more clarification. Hatim and Mason (2005),

discussing the definition of ideology in journalism and politics, justified that such concepts have no use for linguists. Therefore, they defined ideology "as the tactic assumptions, beliefs and value systems, which are shared collectively by social groups" (Hatim & Mason, 2005, p. 120), which is in line with the notion of ideology in the current paper. They also indicated that the above definition is closely associated with the idea of discourse, "as institutionalised modes of speaking and writing which give expression to modes of speaking and writing which give expression to particular attitudes towards areas of socio-cultural activity" (p. 120). In the same vein,

Van Dijk (1998) noted that "if we want to know what ideologies look like, how they work, and they are created, changed and reproduced, we need to look closely at their discourse manifestations" (p. 6).

Moreover, he asserted that "ideological communication is often associated with various forms of manipulation" (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 274). Contemporary ideological hegemony is elucidated in terms of functional strategies focusing on the accomplishment of consent. This way, people will not understand its manipulative nature, and power and dominance will look natural and legitimate. According to Van Dijk (2006), manipulation is one of the crucial concepts of critical discourse analysis, which involves power and deals with abuse of power, or in other terms, domination. Manipulation fundamentally in nature includes methods of mind control that the potential recipients are not aware of. This power abuse and manipulation capacity can provide incomplete or biased knowledge to the potential recipient and even affect their general perception of the world.

Relationship between Unequal Languages

One of the critical challenges of translation studies is the relationship between unequal languages. The unequal power exchanges between cultures locate languages into the hierarchy of the power exchange too. This issue mainly corresponds with the post/colonial perspective, as colonialism in nature stands on the unequal exchanges between societies. However, the superiority of some languages can still be perceived in the modern era. Niranjana (1992) argued that this unequal power exchange between languages gave the 'West' a sort of privilege dealing with its 'Other'. She highlighted that although the whole field of translation studies suffers from this inequality of languages, there is "a strong reluctance to consider the power structure within the discipline" (Niranjana, 1992, p. 79). In the same vein, Benmessaoud and Buzelin (2018) stated, even though in the translational system, all languages are constantly competing for gaining the central position, "English enjoys a 'hypercentral' position with the largest shares of the global market for translation, while some languages with large numbers of speakers, like Chinese and Arabic, remain peripheral" (p. 162). Venuti (1995) also emphasised the unequal relationship between languages, especially in the North American context. He noted that

> translation practices in the Anglo-American context are particularly violent because they are mired in an 'ideology of assimilation' and 'fluent domestication' that erases, through processes of selection and assimilationist discursive strategies, the difference of the cultural other and inscribes local cultural and ideological values onto the other's text. (as cited in Benmessaoud & Buzelin, 2018, p. 162)

In this ground, Niranjana (1992), by emphasizing the significant impact of such unequal trade on the cultural and linguistic production and reproduction, highlighted that the post/colonial perspectives think

of translation as an intermediary device controlled by the Western norms and values. Different containment strategies may be employed in translation to create target texts that conform with the coloniser values. As a post/colonial phenomenon, the relationship between unequal languages can critically affect the translator's overall strategy toward the text. Regularly such strategies convey methods of representing The Other, using the final translation product as a means of illustrating the hegemonic rendering of the colonised to obtain a status that Edward Said (1978, 2003) called "representations without history" (p. 90, p. 87).

Due to the nature of the text, the controlling strategies can be different, either textual or paratextual. In terms of translated texts, Niranjana (1992) argued that the concept of translation conveys the sense of transparent representation of one language into the other without any loss or distortion. In contrast, translation is perceived as a supporting element for comprehensive codification and knowledge production mission in colonial and post-colonial contexts, which Bourdieu (1977) called "symbolic domination" (p. 237). To him, the symbolic domination and its violence work effectively through the creation of the social order by merging the "recognition and misrecognition, … recognition that the dominant language is legitimate … and a misrecognition of the point that this language … is imposed as dominant" (as cited in Niranjana, 1992, p. 32). Furthermore, Bourdieu (1977) emphasised that "the exercise of symbolic violence is so

invisible to social actors precisely because it presupposes the complicity of those who suffer most from its effects" (as cited in Thompson, 1984, p. 46). To clarify the concept, Baer (2014) stated that translation is a device capable of concealing the violence in that the represented literature was made representable. In the same vein, Bassnett and Lefevere (1990), along with Venuti (1998, 2002), have developed a perspective and suggested that post/colonialism is a mission of (mis)translation. In line with the above argument, and considering this fact that Rumi's poetry is a Middle Eastern text (a text from an inferior language), which was translated into the superior English language, the study, along with the other objectives, is going to explore whether the translator feels the same superiority over the text or not.

Paratexts in Translation

The concept of 'paratext' that for the first time coined by Gérard Genette are the items such as "a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces; marginal, inframarginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals" (as cited in Batchelor, 2018, p. 8). In short, paratexts are the elements that turn the main texts into books that can be presented, advertised, and sold to the public. Paratexts are not random elements, but they are purposefully designed to deliver specific meanings, messages, or guides based on various intentions. As Naghmeh-Abbaspour (2020) highlighted,

texts as cultural products that their existence is tightly dependent on the readers need to appeal to their potential recipients. In this process, the paratexts can provide the best showcase to persuade the reader to buy it or leave it aside. (p. 481)

Elaborated further by Genette (1997), the paratexts are divided into the peritext (verbal and non-verbal elements that are in proximity of the text such as titles, footnotes, illustrations, prefaces) and the epitext (verbal and non-verbal elements that are perceived as not being in the vicinity of the text as example interviews with authors, letters, diaries). Some scholars like Kung (2013) believed that analysing the paratexts per se can unveil critical information about translation phenomena. The analysis of paratexts can be meaningful when it is observed from the "relation to their source, and to the culture in which they are produced" (Belle & Hosington, 2018, p. 10). In other words, paratextual material is "an important mediator between the source text and the recipient of the translation" (Alvstad, 2003, p. 274). However, manipulation of the paratexts reveals how the cultural perceptions of the target readers can help translators, editors, or publishers deviate from the translation based on the readership, while simultaneously, the employed manipulation limits the information presented to the public (Pellatt, 2014).

Rovira-Esteva (2016) states that aside from the different methods used in transferring paratextual elements across linguistic and cultural borders, the translation patrons can decide the content and design of the paratexts based on the function of the translation in the target society. The considerations on the stability of the translated material for the target society can cause ideological manipulation and affect the translation of the source text. Also, the significant position of translators cannot be denied through the study of paratexts. Indeed, translators do not use paratexts merely to facilitate the reading experience for the target readers. However, they consider it as a vehicle to inject their perspectives and ideology into the translation. As Haroon (2017) indicated, the prefaces highlight the critical function of paratexts to ease the reception of translations to the target readers. In the same vein, Amirdabbaghian and Shunmugam (2019) discussed that their messages were intended for the readers by focusing on the translators' ideology in the paratexts. Therefore, exploring the paratexts of translation can provide information on the translators' ideological framework and social context and their backgrounds.

METHODOLOGY

As Kung (2013) highlighted, "aside from the textual analysis of the translated text, the paratext is thought to contain vital clues for the researcher to infer or understand the translational phenomena absent or implicit in the translated text" (p. 59). Considering the critical characteristics of paratexts which is functionality, and considering the association of paratextual research with

ideological aspects of translation, the current study aimed to investigate the ideological manipulation of Barks' translations of Rumi's poetry at the paratextual level, specifically from the translator's comments. Based on the correspondence of ideology, power, and manipulation with critical discourse analysis (CDA), as well as the nature of CDA as "an analytical research methodology that investigates discursive manifestations of ideological positioning" (Kim, 2020, p. 120), the present descriptive research has chosen CDA as its analytical framework. However, apart from its primary goal, "to expose the ideological forces that underlie communicative exchanges" (Perez, 2003, p. 2), another priority of employing CDA in the current study is the context-bound approach. This approach emphasises interactions of language and power struggles in society, which is particularly crucial for this study due to the exploration of ideological congruency imposed on the text from the dominant ideology of the target society.

The present study collected the translator's ideologically controversial comments about Rumi and his poetry based on these objectives. These comments are collected from the two general classifications of paratextual material, which are either peritextual, "which is physically attached to the text" like the introduction, notes, prefaces or epitextual material, "the distanced elements located outside the book" (Batchelor, 2018, p. 10), such as interviews. After that, the collected data, mainly textual segments, were double-checked

and categorized in separate tables for analysis. As the study indicated earlier, this descriptive translation study used CDA as its analytical tool. Therefore, in the analysis process, the collected textual segments were analysed through CDA at the level of words, expressions, and concepts that would have been considered ideologically controversial. The extracts were analysed under the main headings of 'Imposing New Age Ideology into Rumi's Poetry' and 'The Relationship between Unequal Languages'. As stated earlier, some scholars like El-Zein (2000) claimed that Barks injected New Age ideology in his translations of Rumi; however, no paratextual studies on these translations were conducted to the best of our knowledge. Therefore, this study has focused on how Barks recontextualised an Islamic text into a New Age context at the paratextual level.

In this process, the study has explored the paratexts in terms of common universal New Age beliefs such as 'all religions as one', 'everything is god', 'God is within you' and 'the crucial role of spiritual beings'. Accordingly, the examples of paratextual segments are presented in separate tables in the findings section. In addition, a brief analysis of every single example is presented following each table.

New Age Movement

The term 'New Age' signifies the bringing or flourishing of a remarkably better way of life (Heelas, 1996). The defining features of the New Age movement can be found in its ideological worldview. For a general

understanding, the adherents of this spiritual movement aimed to bring forth change in human beings and society through a mystical unification with the universe. Newport (1998) has elaborated on the central theme of unity in New Age thinking that encompasses various beliefs and theological concepts. Some examples of these beliefs related to the New Age movement include the idea that all religions are one and that God permeates the universe and the human self. This integral belief of the New Age movement is followed by another essential aspect of spirituality. Clark (2006) stated that New Age ideas were focused on different spiritual perceptions of reality that were in line with most "transcendental assumptions of religiosity" (p. 224). The spiritual element of the movement can be further identified through their beliefs regarding destiny and the attempts to find meaning through a reflective interpretation of events that have occurred in one's personal life (Pike, 2004). These aspects of the New Age movement are based on distinctive approaches that can be in contrast with other worldviews. Followers of the movement had an outlook based on intuition and internal wisdom that were generally against the views of scientists and philosophers (Heelas, 1996). These ideological qualities of the New Age Movement have also been influenced by many world religions, belief systems, and philosophies such as Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism (Newport, 1998). However, such beliefs do not profoundly explore the diverse understandings found in the Islamic spiritual tradition. El-Zein (2000)

has mentioned that the New Age movement highlights Sufism on occasions. However, it does so without any proper reference to the features of genuine Islamic Sufi beliefs. Although the New Age movement has declined from its zenith after the 1970s, it is still present in American culture today. It could be why Rumi has entered the context of New Age ideology so successfully acting as a symbol that resembled many different perspectives attributed to him (Irwin, 2019). These influential qualities of the New Age movement have turned it into one of the dominant ideologies of American society and culture.

Imposing New Age Ideology into Rumi's Poetry

The following examples illustrate how the translator, by imposing the New Age concepts in his comments, faded the Islamic ideology away from Rumi's poetry and recreated it differently in a new context.

Example 4:

I *avoid God-words, not altogether, but wherever I can*, because they seem to *take away the freshness of experience and* **put it inside a specific system**. ***Rumi's poetry belongs to everyone, and his impulse was toward experience rather than any language or doctrine** about it*: our lives as text, rather than any book, be it *Quran, Gospel, Upanishad, or Sutra.* (Barks, 2001b, p. 7)

In the above statement, Barks explicitly declared for Example 4 that he did his best to 'avoid God-words' because such concepts

'put the text inside a specific system'. In contrast, as a Muslim Sufi Sheykh, Rumi deliberately located his poetry in an Islamic context to highlight a 'specific system'. However, through this omission strategy, the translator disconnected Rumi's text from its original ideology. To justify his omission strategy, in terms of religious words, the translator implied that "Rumi's poetry belongs to everyone… his impulse was toward experience rather than any… doctrine… our lives as text, rather than any book, be it *Quran, Gospel* …" (Barks, 2001b, p. 7). Thus, he tried to deemphasise the role of Islamic references in Rumi's poetry. In contrast, Rumi's book, *Masnavi,* due to its numerous Quranic references, metaphorically is known as "*Quran* in the Persian language" (Lewis, 2014; William, 2020).

Example 5:

"Rather than be exclusively part of an organised religion or cultural system, he [Rumi] claimed to belong to that companion who transpires through and animates the whole universe." (Barks, 2001b, p. 9)

Although in the previous statement, Barks (the translator) highlighted that to not put the text in a particular context (Islamic context), he avoided God terms, in this statement (Example 5), he denied the fact that Rumi had a specific religion or he was part of a culture. Thus, the translator tried to detach Rumi from Islam as his religion and the Middle Eastern culture he belongs to through this statement.

Example 6:

It's always unsatisfying to try to say, but *maybe it's to celebrate a friendliness with soul, with spirit's being in a body*, the mysterious Friendship of Rumi and Shams, the extravagant creativeness of life lived inside THAT, and the naturalness of it. (Barks, 1997a, p. 123)

One of the fundamental concepts of the New Age is believing in 'own godhood'. "Indeed, the most pervasive and significant aspect of *lingua franca* of the New Age is that the person is, in essence, spiritual. To experience the 'self' itself is to experience 'God'… 'the inner child', the 'way of the heart', or, most simply, and, I think, most frequently, 'inner spirituality'" (Heelas, 1996, p. 19). According to New Agers, realising the inner godhood can help people arise the slumbering 'higher self'. In Example 6, by merging Rumi and Shams (Rumi's mentor) with New Age ideological concepts, Barks tried to implicitly de-Islamize the text and frame it in the New Age context.

Example 7:

"These poems are love poems, the intimate conversation of self with deep self." (Barks, 2001b, p. 8)

"Based upon their idealistic or spiritual understanding of the nature of the universe, New Age devotees frequently or usually affirm their godhood and/or the self as God. Persons are viewed as individualised manifestations of god-gods and goddesses in exile" (Newport, 1998, p. 5). Accordingly, in

Example 7, we can see that Barks introduced Rumi's poetry (originally Islamic mystical verses) as a love poem, which provides an intimate conversation with the God within self/the higher self. Barks frequently changed the concept of Rumi's Divine love into earthly human love, and through framing strategy, tried to emphasise the New Age ideological perspective.

Example 8:

"Some people **call them Sufis, or mystics. I say they're on the way of the heart."** (Barks, 1997a, p. 132)

In Example 8, the translator tried to modify a range of potential religious terms (Sufis/mystics) favouring target literary system norms. Almost all dictionaries have an entry for the word Sufi. Practically, all of them emphasised the Islamic nature of Sufism. However, here suddenly, Coleman Barks decided to name the Sufis something else to wash away the trace of Islamic ideology from Rumi's poetry.

Example 9:

"**Organised religions have fanatical possibilities that could become dangerous** *to the health of the planet*, not to mention the dear individuals. It is time for us to feel more comfortable **in a place that is not identified with any particular religion (or nation or race or cultural system)** but respectful of the truth in **all those masks of God,** as Joe Campbell calls them. Surely after Campbell's research, we are all Universalists, as the Sufis have so gently recommended for centuries. **The human**

soul is way more vast than any definition. I am that, a voice says, I am." (Barks, 1997b, p. 87)

According to Heelas (1996), New Agers try to move beyond tradition. To them, "Religion is associated with the traditional; the dead; the misleading, the exclusivistic" (Heelas, 1996, p. 23). Not only the trace of such ideology is evident in Example 9, but also we can see how Barks connect Muslim Sufis to this New Age ideology. In the above statement, Barks highlighted his belief in divine religions. He called them different masks of God and dangerous for the world. Besides, following the New Age ideology, Barks believed in 'the holiness of self,' mentioned above.

Example 10:

"The poem on the next page is Rumi's deathbed poem, a type of poem that is very common, almost a requirement for **Zen masters**, but rare in the Sufi tradition." (Barks, 2001b, p. 11)

One of the characteristics of New Agers is their strong attraction toward Eastern traditions such as Taoism and Buddhism (Pike, 2004). An example would be 'Zen' a distinguished Chinese style of Buddhism that is strongly influenced by Taoism. Therefore, we can understand why Barks identified Rumi more resembling Zen masters than Sufi Sheikhs in Example 10. Barks detached Rumi from the Islamic context and located him closer to New Agers' interest.

The Relationship between Unequal Languages

The previous section's examples focused on how the translator imposed the New Age ideology in Rumi's text. However, the following section illustrated a deeper problem: Westerner translators' innate perception of superiority in dealing with the text from the East or the Middle East. Perhaps such a mindset of superiority can be considered the main backdrop that encouraged the translator to accredited himself in performing such ideological manipulation, either at the expense of creating a different image of the author in the target society. The following three examples illustrate how Barks treated Rumi's poetry from a superior point of view.

Example 11:

"**Interviewer:** How much of Persian culture is assimilated with the Sufi way and Rumi's poems? And do we need to understand their culture before we start the poems?"

"**Coleman Barks: No, I don't think so. I don't think Rumi belongs to any particular nation or religion.** He is available to everyone." (Barks, 2001a, p. 9)

Example 11 is one of the strangest comments that a person who is involved in literature might offer. The literature of each part of the world is the manifestation of its culture. So how could it be possible that in 25,000 verses of poetry, there be no trace of the poet's culture, religion, or lifestyle?

Barks simply asserted that Rumi belongs to no nation or religion. These statements present nothing but a blatant attempt to brutally dominate the text and depart the original poet from his own culture.

Example 12:

I was attending Robert Bly's Great Mother conference, which is about poetry, music and mythology — and just whatever Robert has been reading lately. At that point, he had been reading translations of Rumi, and he had a stack of these that he gave to me, and he said in his Lutheran Minnesota accent, *"These poems need to be released from their cages."* And so I began doing that, just on my own for seven years. (Barks, 1997b, p. 82)

The above statement of Example 12 recalls Edward FitzGerald's attitude confronting Khayyam's poetry. On March 1857, FitzGerald, in a letter to his friend, highlighted, "It is an amusement for me to take what Liberties I like with these Persians, Who (as I think) are not poets enough to frighten one from such excursions, and who really do want a little art to shape them" (FitzGerald, 2017, p. 261). To Lefevere (1992), based on the colonial perspective of the time, FitzGerald (as a member of superior culture/language) looked at Khayyam's poetry as a text from an inferior culture and treated it accordingly.

The above comment on Barks' translations of Rumi's poetry shows the same superiority over a text can be perceived. However, as Barks literally does not know

the Persian Language (neither speaking nor writing; El-Zein, 2000; Lewis, 2014), this question comes up about how he approached one of the most prestigious Persian classics without having any knowledge about the language. Moreover, what would Westerners' literary scholars' reaction be if an Easterner (so-called) translator, with zero English language knowledge, approached one of Shakespeare's masterpieces, propagating to release the text from the cage?

Barks's hegemonical behaviour toward Rumi's poetry illustrates how Barks, as a member of the Superior language, accredited himself to approach a text from a minority language and publish his name on the cover as a translator with no knowledge about that language.

Example 13:

"In other volumes I have buried some surprises in the Notes. *The four recipes at the end of The Essential Rumi*, for example, the last two meant to serve 60 and 100 people." (Barks, 2010, p. 487)

Example 13 highlighted the way Barks, as a Westerner translator, treated a Middle Eastern classic text. As the above textual segment illustrated, Barks proudly talked about the four Indian recipes he added to the ending notes of *The Essential Rumi* (Barks, 1995, 1997a, 2009)*,* which according to him, "the last two meant to serve 60 and 100 people" (Barks, 2010, p. 487). The question is, why did the translator credit himself the text owner in a way that allows himself to add such material to someone else's

creation? Following translation ethics, the translator has added some recipes to one of the most prestigious Persian classics? What is the association of Rumi's mystical poetry lines with Indian dish recipes?

This degrading attitude toward the value of Rumi's text manifests the unequal relationship of languages that allows a rewriter or translator of the superior languages to look at the texts from minor languages from the higher position and accredited themselves to treat them with absolute liberty.

DISCUSSION

As their rewriters in the modern era, translators of classical literature are responsible for the survival and reception of such texts (Lefevere, 1992). In introducing a translated text to the target readers, translators, by providing additional information around the text such as introduction, preface, note, try to design a reading guide for the potential recipient. These additional elements around the text, which are known as Paratexts, "exert considerable influence over the reader's perception of a text" (Luo & Zhang, 2018, p. 4). Indeed, apart from facilitating the reading experience, the translation paratexts generally represent a specific perspective, value, or intervention in the text or direct toward a particular perception of the translated text (Luo & Zhang, 2018).

In this ground and following the study's objectives the findings reveal that the translator employed the paratexts as a means to recontextualise the text and, in particular, de-Islamize it based on the

dominant ideological currents of the target social context. As illustrated in the findings, to fit Rumi's poetry with the prevailing ideological current of the target social context, the translator washed up the Islamic nature of the text and subtlety imposed the central concepts of New Age into the translation through his comments. Considering that most American poetry readers, who have little knowledge about Rumi, rely on the information that the translator provided to them, the effect of these supplementary data on the readers' perception is determining. As highlighted in the findings, the translator employed a subtle systematic approach to manipulate the text ideologically. In this process, the relationship of unequal languages helped the translator act liberally. Therefore, by introducing Rumi as a poet who belongs to no culture and religion, Barks created a new image and identity of this Muslim Sufi Sheykh for the target readers. The majority of them were not acquainted with Rumi before confronting Barks translation.

The above noted controversial level of liberty that the translator accredited himself can be justified in the light of the colonial view of the relationship of unequal languages. This perspective encouraged the translator to work extremely liberal dealing with a prestigious text from an inferior language, comparing to the English language. As discussed in the findings, American Barks, who surprisingly did not know the Persian language, warranted himself to release Rumi's poetry from the cage of earlier scholarly translation

(Example 12). As a superior language and culture member, Barks accredited himself to approach a highly prestigious text from an inferior language without knowing that language. The trace of such a belittlement approach can be easily detected throughout Barks' comments and noted. For instance, as the findings indicate, Barks called Rumi's poetry a text which does not belong to any culture or tradition (Example 11). Also, in another example, he added some Indian recipes at the closing notes of Rumi's poetry collection (Example 13).

The history of translation from non-western text into western languages illustrates that this extremely liberal approach is not new. As discussed earlier, in the mid-nineteenth century, the same level of liberty was detected in Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam (another Persian poet). Lefevere (1992), in his discussion about Fitzgerald's translation, highlighted that Fitzgerald obviously considered "Persians inferior to their Victorian English counterparts, a Frame of mind that allows him to rewrite them in a way which he would have never dreamed of rewriting Homer or Virgil" (p. 8). It seems the same pattern has been repeated in Barks' translations of Rumi's. Without a doubt, Barks could not even think about adding Indian recipes at the closing notes of classical western literature like Shakespeare or Chaucer. Moreover, for sure, any sort of ideological deviations in western high literature would have been highly unappreciated.

CONCLUSION

The current study explores the translator's comments (as a form of paratexts) in terms of employing ideological manipulation in line with the dominant values of the target social context. Moreover, as the case study of this research is a translation of a Middle Eastern text into the American context, the study focuses on the translator's perspective on the relationship of unequal languages. Investigating the traces of such (colonial) perspective is significant in the current study because it functioned as the backdrop, which encouraged the translator to act extremely liberal tacking with a text from an inferior language, comparing to the English language. Overall, the findings of this research confirm the presence of a high level of ideological deviations, particularly de-Islamization, at the paratextual level (the translator's comments). Moreover, the findings imply the translator's dominant approach toward a text from an inferior language comparing the superior English language.

To sum up, the present study's findings of the can be considered significant as it reveals systematic recontextualisation and de-Islamization of a Middle Eastern text in light of the relationship of the unequal languages. Moreover, it implies that fidelity in translation is not merely limited to the text but extends to the broad context of paratext, i.e., all extra elements around the text.

Limitation and Future Studies

Considering that the current study limited itself to the ideological manipulation through the translator's comments and notes, it would be interesting to study the paratexts of translations at various levels, either epitext or peritext, in terms of any systematic ideological deviations. Moreover, considering paratexts as elements, purposefully located around the text, the extension of research on different levels of translations' paratexts can significantly contribute to the body of knowledge about paratexts' function in recreation and reception of a translated text in the target context. Also, as the study suggests that paratexts are an empowering platform for translators to effectively direct the readers' perception about the source text and its author, it hopes to make the translator trainees more cautious in their comments respecting authors' voice and ideology.

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