Translation Norms and the Importation of the Novel into Persian

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Abstract

The exportation of modern novel from European languages to other literatures has long been the object of study and has been, most recently, evoked in discussions of World Literature. The introduction of modern novel into the Persian literary system through translation occurred about the turn of the twentieth century. The genre was unprecedented in Persian and the concept of *adabiyat* was specific to its literary tradition. As a result, the genre had to negotiate its position with literary and cultural norms to legitimize itself in the literary system. This negotiation was partly formal, i.e., accepted forms of literary expression, and partly conceptual, i.e., what the literary should express. The present paper focuses on the channels that introduced the genre into the literary system: first, explicit and implicit norms that regulated the transfer of the genre into Persian are outlined; then, the implications of form, literariness, and genre in inter-cultural transfer are discussed to elaborate on how the incoming novelistic discourse was appropriated. In the end, in view of the way the novelistic was transplanted into the Persian literary system, a number of hypotheses about the location of the novelistic in the Persian literary system are developed.

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1. Introduction

In the study of the travels of literary genres, two things have become common knowledge: first, since cultural scripts always precede translated materials they influence the translated content; second, the translated material has a mutual influence on the target culture and transforms it, one way or another (Lambert, 2006; Morson, 1979). The transfer of the novel from European literatures to various literary systems during the nineteenth century is one of such cases which involves changes in the genre as well as transformations in the target literary system: posterior to the transfer neither the genre nor the target system remains the same as before (Jameson, 1993; Moretti, 2000).

The translation of the novel into Persian is not an exception to the rule: the modern novel was unprecedented in the Persian literary system before the European influence. The primary impact of the novel on Persian literature was that it legitimized prose as a literary and artistic medium in a literary tradition where the dominant means of literary production was verse (Ahmadzadeh, 2003; Balay, 2006; Mirabedini, 2003). On the other hand, preexisting literary conceptions, the main focus of the present paper, conditioned the importation of the genre into Persian and transformed the concept of the novel in specific ways.

One way of addressing this mutual influence is to explore the textual and formal features of the reproductions of the novel in non-Western contexts and examine the results of the combination of a new model of organizing fictional narrative with local experience. A main component of this approach is to explore the effects of received European influence on a literary system as part of the genre's global mobility in World Literature (Layoun, 1990; Moretti, 2006a, 2006b).

Another way of investigating the transfer of the novel is to focus on transformations the genre has undergone after initial introduction into a literary system. It seems to me that despite the early reliance of the Persian novel on translation, it has gradually created a relatively independent tradition. Consequently, the relationship between the novel and translation in Persian has not remained the same and the genre has devised further solutions to legitimize itself in the literary system, as social and political conditions have changed.

The extant histories of modern Persian literature (e.g., Aryanpour, 2002a; Aryanpour, 2002b; Kamshad, 1966; Mirabedini, 2003) provide ample information on writers, translators and their works. However, being directed by a linear approach to literary historiography, none synthesizes the data in response to specific questions to contemplate, for example, the varying roles of translation or the legitimizing strategies of modern literature, in general, and the novel, in particular. This is partly because the discourses of modern prose literature and translation are not still associated with scientific autonomy and partly because the discourse of history is imagined to be inclusive of them[1]. A further problem with modern Persian historiography is that literariness is taken to mean the very same thing across time and space and, as a result, the complicated relationships between language and reality, on the one hand, and literary form and socio-historical content, on the other, have been homogenized under the umbrella term of *adabiyat* ("literature").

I cannot yet address the transitions of the novel or translation in the modern history of Persian literature for two reasons: given the long history of both an adequate and detailed analysis demands more space than a single paper. It is also important to understand the initial role of translation and the ensuing conceptions of the genre by examining how it was introduced into the literary system. Only after primary hypotheses about the genre's transplantation are formed is it possible to trace and register the genre's developments and changing cultural significations throughout the century of reproductions that followed initial importation. As a result, I propose to explore the transfer from a different perspective and in the light of translation theory to focus on the channels through which the genre was imported into Persian[2].

The present paper aims to explain, however partially, how the genre was received by focusing on the epistemological aspect of the transfer, as the way knowledge about

European modern literature, in general, and the novel, in particular, was produced in Persian through translation. Since the importation of the novel into Persian coincided with a general will in Iran for the modernization of the socio-political system, understanding the cultural mechanisms that introduced the novel into Persian could also shed light on the cultural aspects of Iranian modernization, which has, more often than not, been the object of historical or socio-political studies.

2. Iranian Receptions

In his introduction to the Persian translation of Alain-René Lesage's picaresque novel, *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* (1715), the Iranian translator, Mohammad Kermanshahi, writes:

> Why would a philosopher like Lesage trouble himself to explicate the personal adventures of an unknown individual, Gil Blas? … He wanted to enlighten readers through the story … by means of all these interesting and amusing stories, the author is depicting the manners and customs of the Spanish society [and] is describing a nation and a country for us (Kermanshahi, 1905; quoted in Balay, 2006, p. 102).

He further adds that the novel is a didactic work and recommends it for everyone, the old and the young, the wise and the unwise. In a similar attempt to explain the significance of the novel he has rendered to readers, the translator of Alexandre Dumas' *The Three Musketeers*, Mohammad Taher Mirza, writes in the introduction:

> These stories are not totally devoid of truth. They are not made up of lies, much the reverse because all the people whose names have been mentioned in this story are real and did exist (Taher Mirza, 1391/2012; quoted in Balay, 2006, p. 103).

In the first instance, a picaresque narrative is taken as the true representation of a nation; in the second, a fictional narrative is introduced as historical reality. This reception of the novelistic fictionality, however, is the rule rather than the exception in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Iran. The translators, one has to add, were men of letters, educated in Europe and mastered at least a couple of European languages. Nonetheless, there are other examples of non-fictional reception of novelistic fiction: for instance, science fiction was read as if it were a factual report on scientific developments and, therefore, Jules Verne became a significant author to translate (Balay, 2006, p. 94). Likewise, the importance of geography as a science motivated the translation of Jules Verne's *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras and Le tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours*, Dafoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (Balay, 2006, pp. 70-71).

But why would a translator interpret a picaresque novel as realistic representation? Why would another translator insist on the historical validity of a novel's fiction? And why was science fiction interpreted as scientific fact? There is no evidence that these early translators were ironic in their introductions or intentionally misrepresented the texts they had rendered for specific purposes. In this case, how can we explain their remarks on the content of the translated novels?

In his attempt to provide an explanation, Balay asks a very relevant and important question: "was translation into the Persian multiple [literary] system a literary activity?" (p. 52). In response, however, he does not have anything but an insufficient Eurocentric orientalist response when, explicating the translators' interpretations, he asserts that early Iranian translators "did not differentiate between fact (reality) and fiction (imaginary)" (pp. 71). This is by no means true: besides the fact that the border between fact and fiction is not always clear-cut, these translators definitely knew the difference between fact and fiction, between the real and the imaginary, at least because they had inherited a millennium of fictional narrative tradition. But what about their comments?

Explaining these readings adequately requires considering two factors: first, a literary tradition preceded the translation of the novel into Persian, a tradition that had defined the "literary" and firmly established it as *adabiyat*.

Second, the genre, a culture-specific and sanctioned way of composing fiction and signaling them to readers, was in translation too. That is to say: a significant point to reckon with is that in the reception of the novel by Iranian translators, their interpretive acts were directed by a conception of literariness that reorganized the novel in new ways. In what follows, I will first explain how norms influence intercultural exchange in direct and indirect ways. Then, I will outline the textual and extra-textual norms that conditioned the reception of the novel in Persian. Finally, I will explain the introductions quoted above in the light of the norms that regulated the importation of the novel into Persian.

3. Norms and Translation

The act of translation oscillates between remaining faithful to the norms and stylistic features of the original text (as affiliation with the author) or loyalty to the norms and rules of the target language (for the sake of the reader); translators have to be able to balance the two in order to render a "good" translation (Brownlie, 2003, p. 135). In the practice of translation, Toury (1995) suggests, norms are determined by the choices that the translator makes along the way and both Chesterman (1993) and Hermans (1999) argue that norms are not a matter of right or wrong but of collective community approval, of *who* does the translation and *for whom*.

What such an understanding of norms implies is that a translator does not always necessarily act voluntarily or consciously in keeping his/her proximity to either end of the spectrum as there are times when the politics of norms influences the rendered translation. Lefevere's (1982) study of the translation of Brecht into the American market, for instance, displays how the politics of norms functions: the application of norms gradually turns into Brecht's favor as he gains more recognition as an original writer:

> When Hays translated Brecht in 1941, Brecht was a little-known German immigrant, certainly not among the canonized writers of the Germany of his time … By the time Bentley translates Brecht [in 1967], the situation has changed: Brecht is not yet canonized in

the West, but at least he is talked about. When Manheim and Willett start bringing out Brecht's collected works in English [in 1972], they are translating a canonized author, who is now translated more on his own terms (according to his own poetics) than on those of the receiving system (p. 7).

The reputation of the author has an impact on the translator's proximity to the poetics of the author or to the norms and expectations of the audience: the more Brecht is recognized, the less he is subjected to the norms of the translation's audience. In other words, the position of an author in the field of cultural production determines how the politics of norms will be played out in translation: initially the translated material is rendered "nearly fully subservient" to the norms of the target culture in the translational process (Simeoni, 1998, p. 12); later, and subject to specific conditions, the author's work is allowed to impose its norms on the target language and theatrical norms.

An additional factor in determining which set of norms will prevail in the act of translation is the position of the language from/into which translation is happening in the international network of languages (Heilbron, 1999): if a language is in a central position, more texts are translated from this language than into it; as a result, it will be easier for this language to impose its norms on the translated material. In contrast, a peripheral language which, for various reasons, relies on translation to a greater extent than a central language cannot easily impose its norms on translated materials.

The negotiation between target norms and imported ones are mediated by cultural institutions which regulate, define and enforce norms. Through their mediation, institutions will either apply a preexisting label to the incoming discourse to appropriate it, or invent a new label to accommodate it. In Brecht's case, for instance, American theatrical institutions were initially motivated by commercial interest; consequently, the originality or subtleties of Brecht's plays were subjected to the dominant linguistic and theatrical norms of the market so that the audience can relate to the play and the

institution can achieve its ends (primarily commercial gain). Later retranslations, however, had other motivations such as the necessity of presenting a canonized author to the audience; as a result, instead of appropriating the incoming discourse through a preexisting label, the translating institution had to invent a category (e.g., a German canonized playwright) to allow for the author's poetics to emerge in translation.

Institutions have, in fact, a significant impact in the application of norms and the importation of discourses: when a system is challenged by problems to which its cultural institutions cannot adequately respond, it has to resort to importation and will (or be forced to) open up for discourses that help it retrieve its balance. In cases when a system's "original" productions are inadequate for its sustenance, translation becomes the space of originality (Even-Zohar, 1990, p. 33). As a consequence, through a "poetic license" the original discourse is allowed to ignore the target system's norms and impose its own.

In moments of crisis, it is in fact natural for translation to ignore the target system's authorities: since the importation happens because of the insufficiency of local norms, translation has to realign and readjust the target system according to its own norms. This is not necessarily a negative impact: for instance, besides legitimizing prose as a literary vehicle which emancipated imagination from poetic constrictions in literary production, translation contributed to a substantial simplification of Persian prose. Nonetheless, since exporting systems are in most cases more powerful, they can oblige "given populations to adapt themselves to the idiom and the rules of visitors" (Lambert, 1995, p. 110). In such circumstances, translation can come to act "as part of the 'technology of colonial domination'" (Hermans, 1996, p. 39). In other words, various cultural systems' experience of and relationship with translation depend on how adequate their institutions and stable they themselves are when the importation occurs.

4. The Novel in Persian

Let me now go back to the importation of the novel into Persian: the transfer occurs at a

historical moment when socio-cultural transformations had created needs which classical literature could not gratify and, as a result, translation became the means of response. That is to say, Iran's political system was weakened, her technological "backwardness" rendered explicit in failing military encounters with imperial powers, and the sufficiency of her old social and educational institutions suspected. The final outcome of all this was the generation of a powerful ideology of progress which, in the political sphere, led to the Constitutional Revolution that concluded itself in 1905-09.

The destabilization of the old social system and the radical changes that were underway had consequences which appeared in the urgency of revamping the education system (emerging in the establishment of the *Darolfonun*) and could not spare classical literature either: first, its concepts of literariness did not reflect or contribute to the struggles that were in process for transforming the patterns of socio-political authority; second, since the main purpose of the revolution was the establishment of the rule of law in the social world (Katouzian, 2003), this literature's other-worldliness was ill-adjusted to the new functions that were being, implicitly or otherwise, defined for literature[3].

During the period that the novel was initially introduced into Persian, the translation of poetry was almost negligible. As such, the novel seems to have entered the Persian literary system to fill a gap, as the solution to a weakened literary institution which was no longer able to respond to the needs of the new environment. With this background, and in order to see what happened to the genre in transfer, the norms that regulated the passage are examined in the following sections. In drafting the norms, six aspects which were, one way or another, involved in and had an impact on the transfer are considered: *who, how, why, for whom, what,* and *when,* of which the last two have already been implicitly suggested.

4.1. Causes

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, four main causes directed the selection of European works for translation: royal

patronage, educational materials, political instigations, and independent translations (Ahmadzadeh, 2003; Balay, 2006). The royalty had a major interest in history and a minor one in romances; such translations were obviously the more sustainable ones because their affiliation guaranteed sustained funding. In its attempts to adapt itself to (and manage) the new socio-political atmosphere "the state was the official organ of modernization" (Ahmadzadeh, 2003, p. 92). This was, in fact, the reason why educational translations were backed by the state. Compared to royal translations, they had a relatively wider audience because they were initiated by the institution of the *Darolfonun* and provided educational materials for the school's curriculum.

The state was, however, the target of political translations whose main aim was the importation of modern notions of governance. These translations chimed with the general stirring in the country for the change of the political system into a parliamentary or constitutional monarchy. As a result, they had a potentially larger audience and appeared mainly in newspapers, magazines and pamphlets to challenge the old system and create an awareness, however limited, of supposedly better political systems.

Independent translations, as the name also suggests, did not rely on the state's support and focused mainly on literary translation. However, they could have enjoyed a better role in the Iranian sphere and exerted a wider socio-cultural influence if it were not for two reasons: in the second half of the nineteenth century, an absolute majority of the Iranian population was illiterate and, as a result, the quantity of readers did not suffice for creating an independent market. Moreover, a universal national educational system was lacking and distribution networks, including publishers, book stores, public libraries etc., were defective, and access to published material and, more importantly, education was limited to a few urban areas.

It should be borne in mind that even though the majority of the population was illiterate, an oral tradition catered narrative fiction to the audience: for example, a narrator, *naqqal*, would recite stories (mainly epic or historical

ones) for the public in places like tea-houses. Likewise, after the introduction of the novel, the oral tradition could at times find substitutes for literacy: a literate member of the family would read novels aloud for the rest (Kamshad, 1966). It is, however, unlikely that such substitute strategies could produce the same influence of written culture in a relatively educated society. As a result, independent translators had to maintain themselves by positions they usually held in state departments to translate the materials of their choice and liking as a work on the side.

4.2. Ideologies

Since the main purpose that energized translations from European languages was progress with the primary intention of compensating for a technological and political "backwardness" by borrowing from Europe, it was inevitable that "the base ideology of translation was an ideology of reformation and revolution" (Balay, 2006, p. 48). Thus conditioned, the choice of works depended on individual translators' assumption that his (and less likely her) selected work was educational, more informative or provided a better comprehension of the advanced world. As a consequence, what guided the choice of literary works were sporadic individual decisions instead of deliberate institutional ones[4].

Given that the cultural institutions which regulated literary translation were either young (e.g., translation), unstable (e.g., literature) or insufficient (e.g., education) in the second half of the nineteenth century[5], the choice of books, in general, and novels, in particular, for translation was neither systematic, nor programmatic nor even based on knowledge. A rationally motivated choice of literary material for familiarity with European modern literary genres (e.g., the novel) or a close understanding of a specific author's *oeuvre* and his/her position in the European context was replaced with a process based on objectives which were primarily non-literary. In addition to the limitations which were due to the choices of translators or the inevitable fragmentations of the act of translation itself, the small number of active translators and the restricted size of the Iranian literary market meant that the available paths for

understanding European literature were even further restricted.

4.3. Translators

In drafting the norms that regulated the importation of the novel into Persian, there are two other factors worth considering: the translators' social location and their fields of expertise. A main feature that defines under-development, as well as a non-democratic socio-cultural structure, is that access to material resources is restricted to certain classes of society as their exclusive privilege. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that an absolute majority of the students who were admitted to the *Darolfonun* were either from the royal family or well-to-do elites who could find a place for their kids at the school. Likewise, going abroad was only possible through the financial support of the state or family and neither gave the common person access to higher education. In his history of modern Persian literature, Aryanpour mentions a shared feature of early translators and novelists: almost all are from the highest classes of society and they owe their careers to a familial literary and cultural tradition (Aryanpour, 2002b). At the same time, while many of them "were bi- or multi- lingual … the first language of none of them was Persian" (Jazayery, 1970, p. 258).

Besides the social class from which most early translators hailed, nearly all students who were sent abroad or who studied at the *Darolfonun* were set to be trained in technical fields; after all, the main reason for revamping the educational system was technological advancement. As a consequence, of the first (1809) and second (1812) delegation of Iranian students to Europe, only three studied painting, English (literature), and philosophy and all the rest (a couple of dozen) specialized in medicine, pharmaceutics, military sciences, artillery, gun making, engineering, chemistry, locksmithry, and natural sciences. Later delegations in 1846 and 1858 also left to specialize in sciences rather than in literature or the humanities (Ahmadzadeh, 2003; Balay, 2006; Vahdat, 2002). Even the titles of the books which were ordered for import, mainly from Germany, show a keen interest in technical fields (Vahdat, 2002).

Yet these students, with such social and disciplinary backgrounds, formed the main body of early Iranian translators who introduced the novel into Persian and for whom literary translation was not, and in view of the size of the market could not be, a main profession (Aryanpour, 2002a; Mirabedini, 2003)[6].

4.4. Literariness

We should also consider the literary expectations of early translators because preexisting notions of literariness undoubtedly conditioned their relationship with the novelistic text. The complexity of establishing the differences between the literary notions of classical Persian literature and the novelistic is one of the main reasons for the ongoing debates in Persian literary theory over the concept of the novel and the conditions of its importation[7]. Regardless of technicalities which define the classical and the novelistic, I shall contrast them based on two fundamental factors: reader-text relationship and epistemological differences.

Previously established literary norms had invested specific texts with status and defined literature accordingly: the two master-texts that preexisted the novelistic in Persian were the canon of classical literature and the Koran. A common feature in the reception of both texts is that an absolute relationship is conceived to exist between language and reality. As a result, they establish the text as the goblet of truth and moral lessons and define the reader's encounter with the text as their extraction.

The introduction of the novelistic dialogism into this system created issues around expectancy and relevance norms. These norms are defined in terms of the relationship of a text with its audience: "the cost-benefit relation between the reader's effort to understand (= cost) and the cognitive effects the message has (= benefit): the more benefit and less cost, the more relevance"; effective communication has to aim for maximum relevance (Chesterman, 2007, p. 10). Even though early translators were aware of the necessity of rendering prose accessible to the wider public, even at the expense of "disloyalty" to the original text (Haddadian

Moghaddam, 2011, p. 226), the transformation of the literary from a poetic (and mainly other-worldly) literature into a prose (and particularly worldly) one risked becoming too costly for readers and involved abandoning the established notions of literariness and ways of communication[8].

As a consequence, it was inevitable that the novelistic dialogic text would be treated just like classical literary texts or the Koran, giving a god-like position to the novelist. Since progress and emulation of European norms was the driving ideology of translation, the result was an uncritical reception of translated texts: in other words, if the Muslim Iranian, having subscribed to the universal claims of religion, faced Mecca and read the Koran (or classical literature) in search of eternal truths, the Europeanized Iranian, having given in to the universal claims of modern humanist traditions, could not help facing Paris and reading texts from that Other world of technology and advancement[9].

In this sense, the similarity between the Muslim and the Europeanized Iranians' approaches to the text is that to both the text has a theological significance, and the reader reveres the word and worships the god behind it. Likewise, in both knowledge and prestige are perceived to be elsewhere, composed in another language, and none cultivates a critical faculty in readers to read literary texts (or non-literary ones, for that matter) by testing them against the immanent reality and experience. In both the norm is to expropriate imagination so much as to fit imported ideological and conceptual frames defined elsewhere and in other socio-political contexts.

The second difference between the classical and the novelistic notions of literariness is rooted in their conceptions of knowledge and indicates deep-seated epistemological divergences between them: whereas in the former knowledge precedes hypothesis formation and experimentation, in the latter it follows them[10]. In the former, knowledge is absolute and cannot be modified later and, as such, if experience provides evidence that fails to fit pre-established knowledge, it is the evidence that will have to be justified without affecting the established truth, and not the other way round. The modern concept of

knowledge, however, is founded on falsifiability and requires the modification of available results by further hypotheses and experimentations, as the necessary condition of knowledge itself.

Such textual and epistemological divergences sanction aesthetic ideologies which design their disparate regimes of representation: the metaphysical ideology of classical literature *vis-à-vis* the worldly ideology of the novelistic[11]. A major site for the emergence of this difference is the notion of fictionality: in classical aesthetics, fiction functions through the suspension of disbelief; modern novelistic fiction depends on the plausibility of its events. In the latter case, claiming the truthfulness of a narrative and pretending historicity was a strategic move to legitimize the novelistic fictional discourse, especially at times when the historical discourse was dominant, as in the case of the eighteenth century English novels (Gallagher, 2006).

Since fictional narrative (mostly in verse) had had its own position in the Persian *adabiyat*, the novelistic fictional model had to tackle, whether consciously or, in the case of Iranian translators, unconsciously, serious impediments to be legitimized as a literary form proper. This is because

> … the novel is not just one kind of fictional narrative among others; it is the kind in which and through which [plausible] fictionality becomes manifest, explicit, widely understood, and accepted. The historical connection between the terms novel and fiction is intimate; they were mutually constitutive (Gallagher, 2006, p. 337).

5. The Genre in Translation

Under the urgency of translating from European languages to fulfill the goals of the ideology of progress, there is no evidence that early translations intended, as their primary goal, to introduce the novel into the Persian literary system. By implication, the transfer of the genre was not informed by its history or by its contextual significations because knowledge of what the novel was or meant in the European context, what the socio-economic and cultural presuppositions of

realism were and how they affected the organization of society or the formulation of the literary did not appear as part of translational concerns.

In this view, it is unlikely that early translators intentionally interpreted a picaresque novel as the true representation of a nation or science fiction factually. Likewise, it does not seem that their explanations intended to claim historicity for translated novels as a strategy to legitimize the new genre in Persian. In the light of the norms discussed above, two issues explain their readings: first, the translation of an unfamiliar genre and, second, the conflicts ensuing from incompatible notions of fictional literariness. In other words, their readings are effects of the way various discourses, i.e., the scientific, the historical or the fictional, are understood and encoded in a cultural or literary semiotic system through various indicators of form that direct the audience's response to the text.

Early translators' interpretive tools were formulated by questions they asked and the way they approached the text: the literary and cultural norms explicated above participated in determining the interaction of early Iranian translators with European novels. As cognitive notions, they shaped their "interpretive acts" by forming the hypotheses they proposed in discovering meaning. One conceptualizes and understands "something unfamiliar *as* something more familiar, i.e., in terms of something that already exists in our conceptual repertoire" (Chesterman, 2008, p. 52)[12]. As a result, the translators' reception of the novelistic text was formulated by the way they understood the text, the literary and its function in society: they imposed their understanding of the literary on the novelistic text. This is, however, a given in intercultural relationships: a "contact zone" is always prone to "miscomprehension, incomprehension, dead letters, unread masterpieces, [and] absolute heterogeneity of meaning" (Pratt, 1991, pp. 37-38).

5.1. Narrative form

Early Iranian translators were quite right in the link they had established between modern science and the novel, but they missed the fact that it was scientific developments that had actually created the social ideologies which led to narrative developments that were ultimately reflected in literature as realism, and not the other way round. Moreover, in the classical tradition of Persian fiction, extended prose narratives were either historically real or had historical elements woven into them. But imaginative prose narratives as literature, regardless of their mimetic qualities, were mostly limited to short narrative forms, i.e., *hekayat* or *qesseh*.

In the cases mentioned above, the plausibility of an extended narrative is either taken for factual reporting or for history, because the novelistic was subjected to a preexisting division of formal labor in Persian: fiction writing in prose could be justified only if it was presented in a short form; long prose narratives were reserved for the historical discourse[13]. In this light, the extended plausible novelistic narrative could be received only within the restrictions set by classical fictionality. Given the lack of sufficient knowledge about the nineteenth century European literary discourse in Persian, the historical and the fictional, the ontological and the epistemological, were swapped[14].

5.2. Genre

A fundamental presupposed concept of the literary proper has a clear role in formulating early translators' interpretation of translated novels. For example, in the case of the translation of Lesage's picaresque novel, the translator identifies the novelist in terms of a classical poet, as a philosopher who uses literature for didactic purposes. The seriousness of the work of the writer-as-philosopher, who supposedly contemplates life and its meaning was assumed to be incompatible with the banality of representing the quotidian adventures of an unknown individual. So, the only thing that could justify the representation of an ordinary life in literature, and subsequently resolve the challenge it posed to previous literary notions, was didacticism. This is while the representation of the individual and his/her quotidian life are central to European realistic novels and constantly postpone the moment of the emergence of the lesson; as a result, the narrative can continue to unfold into a lengthy piece.

It is, therefore, obvious, that a literary subgenre such as the picaresque was not legible in the translator's interpretive tools and the critical motivations and implications of such characterization were missed. Consequently, the translator reports his own understanding of the translated material rather than actually introducing the genre to the audience. We should also bear in mind that most early translators were trained in sciences before turning to literary translation. What this combination suggests is that the plausibility of the literary text was also encountered through a technical lens which, at the end, led to a scientific and literal reading.

5.3. Social location

What further contributed to the ideological transformation of the genre was the social location of translators, which twisted its critical edge in their favor and channeled it from the European middle class to the Iranian higher class. This feature, however, seems not to be specific to the Iranian case. In his studies of the Brazilian novelistic tradition, Schwarz (1992, 2001) gives an account of what happens if and when a middle class genre is appropriated by the higher class: the foremost feature of such a novelistic tradition is that its representations fail to shed any light on the potential oppressions that the higher class is responsible for.

This point is quite ironic because in tandem with the socio-political changes at the turn of the twentieth century, a literary revolution was also in process to simplify language for democratic purposes. But the attempt to open the literary sphere on the common person was negating itself not only because the translators' own lack of sufficient knowledge risked spreading false information (hence reversing the intended "enlightenment") but also because the introduction of the novelistic frustrated literary expectations which considered verse as the literary vehicle proper. In addition, the mere simplification of language could not have been enough in a largely illiterate society and massive investment in education was required to train the following generations in the new language and to familiarize them with the new literature.

In short, a double movement happens in the process of the importation of the novel: while the new institutions, in this case the institution of translation, were focused on modernizing the literary, other institutions, particularly the institution of literature, exercised their influence at a deeper level to resist the changes by reappearing in a different guise. When translation began importing ideas it was a young institution which was powerful because it had the backing of nearly all intellectuals; but the point is that the pioneers of literary modernization had been trained in a literary institution which was itself part of the worldview they wanted to change. In the absence of a systematic and knowledge-based familiarity with European literary notions, the result was that they unwittingly reproduced the very same institutions they wanted to transform.

6. Concluding Remarks

In order to explain the reception of the novel in Persian during the second half of the nineteenth century, I outlined the explicit causes and ideologies of translation as well as the implicit literary norms which most probably left their mark on the importation of the modern novel into Persian. This genre, and specifically the realistic novel, is by many accounts the literary form of a bourgeois individualized society where written communication is possible (McKeon, 1987; Moretti, 1987, 2006a, 2006b; Watt, 1957). Its transfer under pressure for modernization and aspiration for the status of Europe into a society that hardly shared any of these features (i.e., a non-individualized society dominated by other-worldly values) meant that the novel had to change so much as to fit predetermined literary notions.

The study of the global dissemination of the novel must. Therefore, take preexisting literary traditions into account both as an implicit influence on the transfer of the novel and as a possible source for the genre's further developments. Otherwise considering the non-Western modern novel only as a mixture of the western narrative model, the local reality experience and local form (Moretti, 2000) leaves something to be desired.

In view of available evidence, and as a working hypothesis for further investigations of the novel in Persian, I would like to argue that the novelistic fiction was not the cultural territory of early translators. That is to say, they did not deliberately insist on a non-fictional reading of novels because the plausibility of extended prose narrative fiction was not part of their cultural vocabulary and it was not out of, say, intentional ideological planning that translated novels' fictional discourse was transformed. It is necessary to account for the fact that the genre, as a specific encoding of fictional discourse through experience for a more effective communication between the producer and consumer, was also in transfer and became difficult to decipher when it passed into the Persian literary system.

How our knowledge of a phenomenon is produced has a determining effect on how we interact with it. Understanding the channels that introduced the novelistic into Persian is important because most translators were also involved in the modernization of Iranian socio-political structures. If seen through translation theory, however, there is an incompatibility between the means and the ends of their efforts: the very same class of society that was pushing for radical reforms was in fact reproducing classical literature in a new guise. This was enough to reveal the self-defeating aspects of the Constitutional Revolution.

As a consequence of the dependence of the Persian novel on translation, implicit norms were established. Language came to coincide with literature which was assumed to be in a direct and unambiguous relationship with reality. The literary was reduced to socio-political content and the relevance of form as the particular encoding of the literary in relationship with its context was ignored. Moreover, since the efforts of individual translators were not institutionally constrained and their products did not significantly depend on the market, they could negate the social aspect of literature (and translation) and disregard the reader in their definition and production of the literary proper.

Linguistically, this was significant because in a weakly institutionalized system the centrifugal pull of the language that ensued from translation was hardly balanced by the centripetal forces – e.g., original productions or editorial supervision. As a result, language was exposed to a stratifying force which could bar rather than facilitate communication. Besides, literal fragmentary readings did not only determine the fate of the new genre in Persian but also conditioned the intercultural transfer of knowledge in general: since the location of knowledge was external to the language in use, critical reflection on translated ideas and the scope or condition(s) of their applicability to the target context was not seriously considered. Therefore, no consistent and substantial critique of European modernity, as the model, was produced in those critical years of Iranian history[15].

In the history of the Persian novel, there are further issues that need to be considered both in literary and translation theory. In view of its different developments in Europe and in Iran, the very same genre has divergent significations in the two contexts: in the former the novel was a middle class and organic development whereas in the latter it was a higher class imported genre. Since each is connected to its environment in its own particular way and its regimes of representation are thus determined, in cross cultural studies (specifically the study of Persian novels) one has bear in mind that the genre in Persian might be formulated by interests (e.g., class, religion, etc.) that may have concealed themselves under the dominant European notions of the genre.

Besides, since the contexts of the production and the histories of both novelistic traditions are different, it is critically erroneous to apply the notions developed for the study of European novels to Persian ones. In other words, in order to define and categorize Persian novels, resorting to or relying on the established European models (e.g., various –isms that have been developed) is critically false because it would apply *a priori* categories to a literary history which is, by its very nature, more complicated than an organically developed literary system. This would reduce critical activity, in literature or its translation, to a theological exercise which inherently conflicts with the act of translation, that is openly turning to other cultures and literatures.

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Notes:

[1] The rise of disciplinary consciousness in Iran during the past decade has led to the establishment of Translation Studies and Comparative Literature departments and journals. This may lead to new literary histories with a rigorous knowledge-based, rather than a general information-based, approach to the history of literature.

[2] For a narrative of the complex history of the first novel translated into Persian, see Haddadian Moghaddam (2011).

[3] The weakening of the institution of literature had occurred long before the Constitutional Revolution: after Jami (1414-1492) the tradition of Persian classical poetry fell into quantitative and qualitative decline until it was revived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with the "new poetry" school founded by Nima Yushij (1896-1960).

[4] For a detailed account of translation during the Qajar period (1785-1925) and the sporadic nature of translations during the era see Kiyanfar (1989).

[5] An evidence of the insufficiency of Iranian literary institutions at the time is the cities from where the history of the novel in Persian commences, that is Cairo, Istanbul, and Kolkata. This was only partly caused by political strife and the insufficiency of literary institutions certainly played a role.

[6] For an overview of the position of professional translators, in modern Iran, see Azarang (1998, 2001).

[7] Mirabedini (2003), Aryanpour (2002a), Balay (2006) and Ahmadzadeh (2003) argue that the Persian novel was the result of imitating Western models whereas Khorrami (2003) argues otherwise.

[8] Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh's famous short story, *Farsi Shekar Ast* ("Persian is Sweet", 1921) directly comments on the issue: both the Arabicized language of the clergyman and the Frenchified jargon of the Europeanized intellectual fail to effectively communicate with the common person, mainly because, from the common person's point of view, both are "costly" and "irrelevant".

[9] For a review of the images of the occident, specifically France, in Iranian intellectuals' imagination and in modern literature see Nanquette (2013), especially Chapters Two and Three. Paris is shown to be revered and blindly idolized by intellectuals, something which thrives on clichés and feeds back into them.

[10] The rise of the realistic novel and the function of plausible plots as a propelling engine in the narrative structure have been often related to the dawn of the new experimental science. See Hunter (1990) and Goldknopf (1972).

[11] The otherworldliness of classical literature's ideology must be cautiously applied: what is addressed here is the canon of classical Persian literature and its dominant readings which have for long shaped the literary sphere; but potential non-canonized literature and worldly interpretations of the canon are excluded from this argument.

[12] What Chesterman (2008) calls "Hermeneutics AS" in translation studies, Goffman (1974) names "frames of understanding" in sociology, Eco (1980, 1981) categorizes as readerly *topics* and textual *isotopy* in hermeneutics, and Butler (2009) phrases "field of intelligibility" in philosophy and cultural studies. In these conceptions, prior experience always defines following interactions, whether in the textual or social world.

[13] The history of European novel is filled with struggles that intended to legitimize the length of novelistic narratives in various ways (Doody, 1997; Goody, 2006; Herman, 2008; Siti, 2006; Varvaro, 2006). The Persian novel has also had to negotiate its position and justify itself in the literary system; but this should be elaborated upon separately.

[14] To read on the link between knowledge and translation see Dam, Engberg and Gerzymisch-Arbogast (2005), and for specific explications of the ontological and epistemological differences of the historical and the fictional and the function of genre in marking each as a specific territory see Dolezel (1998, 1999, 2010).

[15] I have separately discussed the problems of the conceived relationship between modernization and translation in Persian (Azadibougar, 2010). The problem of the lack of a consistent and progressive critique of modernity in Iran is still persistent: despite the significance of modernization today, *independent* philosophical reflections on the notion of the modern and its potential implications for the socio-political and cultural organization of the Iranian society are scarce.