

Manipulation of Taboo Language in Four American Novels Translated into Persian

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Abstract

Translated literature almost always involves a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose. Such manipulations are imposed by the 'patrons' who try to regulate the relationship between the literary system and the other systems a society is composed of. Working on this fundamental broadly-acknowledged assumption about translation, the present study aimed at identifying the concepts that are often manipulated in translated literature published in contemporary Iran. It also attempted to spot the manipulative strategies imposed on translations and the counter-manipulative strategies adopted by translators to sidestep those manipulations. Drawing on the findings of the so-called 'Manipulation School' and Dukāte's typology of manipulation strategies, it conducted a comparative analysis of the source texts and translated versions of four American novels recently published in Iran. The codification of the data revealed the frowned upon taboo concepts to be descriptions of, or references to, sexual activity, physical contact between the sexes, human body, extramarital relationships, swear words, prostitution, nudity, homoeroticism, alcoholic drinks, and dancing. The most frequent manipulation strategies were 1) deletion of the taboo concepts, 2) substitution of the concepts with totally different concepts, and 3) attenuation of the forbidden words, that is to say, expressing them in a more polite, softer language. Although the manipulation mechanism is most effectively in place, the translators seemed to have occasionally applied creative strategies to evade the imposed manipulations. Such counter-manipulative strategies were classified as legitimization, archaism, use of less familiar words, degeneralization, denunciation, and borrowing in this study.

Keywords: manipulation, rewriting, patronage, translated literature, taboo concepts

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1. Introduction

Translated literature, according to the proponents of the so-called ‘Manipulation School’, almost always “implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose” (Hermans, 1985, p.11). Such manipulations are supposed to fine-tune the source text on the basis of the norms and standards of the target society. That is to say, translations involve manipulation of texts “for a specific target audience in conformity with target language norms and under various constraints” (Dukāte, 2007, p. 39). Furthermore, translation, as Lefevere observes, is a rewriting of an original text (Lefevere, 1992). Rewritings, he further elaborates, “are produced in the service, or under the constraints, of certain ideological and/or poetological currents” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 5). Rewriters, thus, have to “manipulate the originals they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant, or one of the dominant ideological and poetological currents of their time” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 8). As the publication mechanism in contemporary Iran demands books to be ‘examined’ closely before the issuance of print permits, one can expect to find many instances of such manipulations in the translated fictional books that are published within the formal book market. In fact, the manipulation of translated literature is a well-known phenomenon in the country and has long been a matter of debate between translators and publishers on the one hand and the Book Bureau, the organization responsible for the ‘examination’ of books before publication, on the other.

The motivation behind the present paper was to follow a number of books that had once been announced ‘unprintable’ by the Book Bureau (see Farahzad & Bolouri, 2014), but were given print permits during the subsequent years and were eventually published and distributed within the Iranian book market. The study aimed at identifying the textual alterations, or the so-called ‘manipulations’, which changed these books from ‘unprintable’ to ‘printable’. Attempts were made to specify the concepts and linguistic elements that were manipulated in these books and to reveal how such concepts were manipulated. Meanwhile, as an initial analysis carried out before the actual data collection stage suggested that translators sometimes try to find creative ways of keeping the forbidden concepts in their translated works, the study also looked for the counter-manipulative strategies that translators might have adopted to evade the imposed manipulations.

The study is informed by the findings of the Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), which aims at describing “the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience” (Holmes, 2000, p.176). Within the different types of DTS, it focuses on product-oriented DTS, an “area of research which describes existing translations” (Holmes, 2000, p.176) and might even go further and undertake comparative studies of the source text and its various translations. It particularly relies on the findings of the ‘Manipulation School’ (see Hermans, 1985) and the concept of ‘patronage’ developed by Lefevere (1992).

Research Questions

The study, thus, attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) What concepts and linguistic elements are manipulated in the translations of the fictional books examined in this study?
- 2) What manipulative strategies are most frequently used when manipulations are imposed on a fictional book?
- 3) What strategies do translators apply to keep the oft-manipulated concepts in their translations?

2. Literature Review

Through their practical fieldwork and case studies, particularly a volume of essays edited by Theo Hermans (1985), the scholars of the ‘Manipulation School’ tried “to establish a new paradigm for the study of literary translation, on the basis of a comprehensive theory and ongoing practical research” (Hermans, 1985, p.10). Hermans (1985) states that the members of the group have the following in common:

A view of literature as a complex and dynamic system; a conviction that there should be a continual interplay between theoretical models and practical case studies; an approach to literary translation which is descriptive, target-oriented, functional and systemic; and an interest in the norms and constraints that govern the production and reception of translations, in the relation between translation and other types of text processing, and in the place and role of translations both within a given literature and

in the interaction between literatures. (Hermans, 1985, pp. 10-11)

The idea that literature is a system “goes back to the Russian Formalists” (Hermans, 1985, p. 11). For them, culture is “a complex ‘system of systems’ composed of various subsystems such as literature, science and technology” (Steiner, cited in Lefevere, 1992, p. 11). There is “an interplay among subsystems” (Steiner, cited in Lefevere, 1992, p. 11), in a way that the literary system and the other systems in a social system “are open to each other, they influence each other” (Lefevere, 1985, p. 226). This means that literature produced in a certain society cannot fall out of step with the other subsystems that comprise that society. Literary texts written or rewritten in a culture must conform to other subsystems of the culture and should not contradict its dominant beliefs and principles.

2.1. The polysystem theory

Based on the systemic views of the Russian Formalists, Even-Zohar (1990) develops the polysystem theory, which allows for the systematic study of translated literature. For him, literature is a “differentiated and dynamic ‘conglomerate of systems’ characterized by internal opposition and continual shifts” (Hermans, 1985, p. 11). The literary polysystem is “a component of a larger (poly)system – that of ‘culture’” (Even-Zohar, 1990, p. 22). According to Even-Zohar, every literary polysystem is ‘subjugated’ to culture (Even-Zohar, 1990, p. 22), and corresponds with the other components of culture, such as “language, society, economy, politics, ideology, etc.” (Even-Zohar, 1990, p. 23). In other words, “the literary polysystem is correlated with other cultural systems and embedded in the ideological and socio-economic structures of society” (Hermans, 1985, p. 11). When literature is considered in this “larger sociocultural context”, it can be “viewed not just as a collection of texts, but more broadly as a set of factors governing the production, promotion and reception of these texts” (Shuttleworth, 2009, p.197).

Translated literature is considered “as a system within the literary polysystem” (Hermans, 1999, p. 108) competing with other systems “for the dominant position”

(Shuttleworth, 2009, p.197). Translation, thus, “may play a primary or a secondary role in a polysystem” (Hermans, 1999, p.109), and it might occupy a central or a peripheral position within that polysystem. This theory, as Hermans observes, places translations “in a larger field of cultural activity” and provides “a way of connecting translations with an array of other factors in addition to the source text” (Hermans, 1999, p. 110). The polysystem theory “integrates translation into broader sociocultural practices and processes, making it a more exciting object of study” (Hermans, 1999, p. 110).

2.2. Descriptive translation studies

Under the influence of the polysystem theory, a group of translation scholars developed a branch of Translation Studies called ‘Descriptive Translation Studies’ (DTS). According to Toury, “[n]o empirical science can make a claim for completeness and (relative) autonomy unless it has developed a descriptive branch” (Toury, 1985, p. 16). He considers translation as an ‘empirical science’ (Toury, 1985, p. 16) and underlines the importance of developing such a descriptive branch in Translation Studies. For him, translations are ‘observational facts’ and “research into translation should start with observational facts, i.e., the translated utterances themselves” (Toury, 1985, p. 18).

In 1972, Holmes developed his map of Translation Studies, which considers descriptive translation studies as one of the two main branches of pure translation studies. He defines its purpose as describing “the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience” (Holmes, 2000, p. 176). Descriptive Translation Studies, in fact, “wants to study translations as they are, and to account for their occurrence and nature” (Hermans, 1999, p. 35). Holmes (2000) further divides research conducted in DTS into three major types: product-oriented, function-oriented, and process-oriented.

Product-oriented DTS is an “area of research which describes existing translations” (Holmes, 2000, p. 176). In other words, the focus of this branch of the DTS is the translated texts themselves. Function-oriented DTS focuses on the function of translations “in the recipient socio-cultural situation” (Holmes, 2000, p.

177) and examines the influence of translations on the target context. And finally, process-oriented DTS investigates the process of translation and examines what goes on in “the translator’s mind as he [sic] creates a new, more or less matching text in another language” (Holmes, 2000, p. 177).

2.3. Manipulation school

In 1985, a volume of essays edited by Theo Hermans entitled *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation* was published. In his introduction to the book, Hermans wrote “[f]rom the point of view of the target literature, all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose” (Hermans, 1985, p. 11). The publication of this volume led to the establishment of a new paradigm for the study of literary translation, which adopted a *systemic, descriptive, target-oriented*, and *functional* approach (see Hermans, 1985). Based on the title of the book and the assertion that ‘all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose’, the group of scholars came to be known as the ‘Manipulation School’. For the scholars associated with this school, “translation can never be an untroubled communication of a foreign text; it is rather manipulation” (Venuti, 2000, p. 217).

Manipulation in translation, according to Dukāte (2007), refers to

the translator’s/interpreter’s handling of a text which results in the adaptation of the text for the Target Audience, considering the cultural, ideological and literary differences between the cultures in contact, which takes place within a particular cultural setting and is carried out by a human agent, with the consequence of a possible influence of individual- or psychology-related factors upon the end product” (Dukāte, 2007, p. 79)

Dukāte maintains that translational manipulation can be regarded as either negative or positive. Manipulation is negative when there are “visible signs of translator’s ideological intrusion into the text, that is distortion (whether intentional or not) of the source text inspired first and foremost by [...] the translator’s religious

or political outlook” (Chrisafulli, cited in Dukāte, 2007, p. 78). Manipulation is positive when the translator attempts “to bring a particular text closer to the target audience, thus, securing its acceptance at the target pole, i.e. to mediate the cultural gap and facilitate understanding” (Dukāte, 2007, p. 78).

According to Dukāte (2007), manipulation can be text-external or text-internal. Text-external manipulation “proceeds outside the text” (Dukāte, 2007, p. 108). It can refer to “the process of selection of texts to be translated, the external constraints affecting the translator in the process of translation as well as the processes which take place in relation to a particular translation after the translation has been completed” (Dukāte, 2007, p. 108). Text-internal manipulation, on the other hand, refers to “all kinds of manipulation which may occur within the text” (Dukāte, 2007, p. 109). It brings about shifts in the target text in order to make it more acceptable to the target audience and the target socio-cultural conditions.

Dukāte (2007) further subdivides text-external and text-internal manipulation into ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’ manipulation, each of which can take the form of ‘improvement’, ‘handling’, and ‘distortion’. Text-internal manipulation as conscious distortion, which is the focus of the present study, is a kind of manipulation that occurs “due to the dominant political ideology” (Dukāte, 2007, p. 109). It is a type of “ideology-induced manipulation” (Dukāte, 2007, p. 102) which gives rise to changes in the target text in order to bring it in line with the dominant ideology of the target society. This type of manipulation has its roots in social, political, and individual factors.

2.3.1. Manipulation strategies

Dukāte (2007) presents a classification of manipulation strategies that can often be found in translated texts. Such manipulations are usually carried out on ideological and moral grounds to handle taboo and immoral concepts as well as politically undesirable viewpoints. Dukāte (2007) also gives several examples of translational manipulations that took place under the Soviet Union. Her manipulation strategies are as follows:

- **Deletion:** lexical transformations in the text where “some ST units are omitted in the translation for different reasons” (Dukāte, 2009, p. 79). This might be carried out based on ideological, political, religious, or moral considerations which make translators omit a part of the source text.

- **Substitution:** a kind of transformation where language units “are replaced by other forms” and units (Dukāte, 2009, p. 192). Dukāte (2007) gives the example of a sentence about two Russian soldiers who ‘loot’ a clock factory, being replaced by another one describing them as soldiers who had ‘found’ a clock factory.

- **Addition:** “lexical transformation whereby the missing elements are introduced in the text” (Dukāte, 2009, p. 79). In an example, Dukāte gives from the Latvian translation of Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse Five*, the translator changes ‘the state’ to ‘the fascist state’ due to the hostile relations between Nazi Germany and the Soviet bloc.

- **Attenuation** (or softening): a “widely used strategy applied due to moral considerations to mitigate taboo words or ‘upgrade’ substandard language” (Dukāte, 2007, p. 56).

2.4. Rewriting

Lefevere (1992) believes that translation is a rewriting of an original text. For him, every rewriting can be said to “reinterpret, alter or manipulate” the original text in some way (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 147). Rewritings “are produced in the service, or under the constraints, of certain ideological and/or poetological currents” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 5). As Lefevere (1985) notes, there have been

Different attempts at interpretation undertaken on the basis of a certain concept of what the world should be like (ideology) as well as a certain concept of what literature should be like (poetics), and these attempts [...] have always been temporary, transient. They have accepted or rejected works of literature on the basis of the ideology and the poetics they happened to be serving, but, much more often, they have adapted works of literature, ‘rewriting’ them until they happened to fit their own

poetics, their own ideology. (Lefevere, 1985, p. 217)

This means that rewriters manipulate the source text they are translating “to make it serve their own ends” (Lefevere & Bassnett, 1990, p. 6). As an example, Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) refer to feminist translators who manipulate the text in order to advance their own ideology. This can help them project their own desired image of a work and will eventually serve them as a tool for producing a desired effect on their audience, or influencing them to accept or believe what they want them to believe, or inducing a certain behavior in them (see Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990).

2.5. Patronage

Patronage is defined as “the powers (persons, institutions) which help or hinder the writing, reading and rewriting of literature” (Lefevere, 1985, p. 227). It can be exercised by persons, “groups of persons, a religious body, a political party, a social class, a royal court, publishers, and, last but not least, the media” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 15). These patrons “try to regulate the relationship between the literary system and the other systems, which, together, make up a society, a culture” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 15). They act through “institutions set up to regulate the writing or at least the distribution of literature” (Lefevere, 1985, p. 228). Examples of such institutions are academies, bureaus for censorship, and the educational establishment. Such institutions, according to Lefevere (1985), are close to the ideology of the patrons and try to make sure that the literary production does not oppose the dominant ideology of those patrons. As for translated literature, the ideology dominant at a certain time in a certain society “dictates the basic strategy the translator is going to use and therefore also dictates solutions to [translation] problems” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 41).

Lefevere (1985, 1992) maintains that patronage is composed of three elements: 1) the *ideological* component, “which acts as a constraint on the choice and development of both form and subject matter” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 16). The ideology can be manifested in translation through the omissions, additions, and shifts of various kinds imposed on the textual production of translations. 2) the *economic*

component: “the patron sees to it that writers and rewriters are able to make a living, by giving them a pension, appointing them to some office [...], paying royalties on the sale of books, or employing writers and rewriters as teachers and reviewers” (Lefevere, 1985, p. 227). 3) an element of *status*: “acceptance of patronage implies integration into a certain support group and its lifestyle” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 16). In order to be integrated into this support group, writers and rewriters need to be granted status.

Patronage can be *differentiated* or *undifferentiated* (Lefevere, 1985, 1992). In other words, “literary systems can be controlled by a type of patronage which is either differentiated or undifferentiated in nature” (Lefevere, 1985, p. 228). Patronage is undifferentiated “when its three components, the ideological, the economic, and the status components, are all dispensed by one and the same patron” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 17). Examples of this form of patronage are rulers of the past, who had a poet attached to their court and gave them a pension. Patronage is differentiated “when economic success is relatively independent of ideological factors, and does not necessarily bring status with it” (Lefevere, 1992, p. 17). In this type of patronage, “the three components it consists of are not necessarily dispensed by one and the same person or institution” (Lefevere, 1985, p. 229).

The institution responsible for controlling the publication and distribution of books in Iran is ‘the Book Bureau’. This institution is responsible for examining books prior to their publication. The examiners working at the Bureau read the books and decide about them. A book is given a publication permit if the examiners decide that it does not violate the regulations. If they find instances of violation, they ask the publishers to introduce changes or ‘manipulations’ in the book, omitting some parts, for example, or rewriting some other parts to bring the book in line with the regulations. If the publisher and the translator change the text as required, the book receives the publication permit. In other cases, when the book does not comply with the publishing regulations and it is decided that it cannot be negotiated and rewritten, it is denied a permit and is announced ‘unprintable’. This means that the patronage system in Iran is of the undifferentiated type, and the Book Bureau controls all three components of the patronage. This bureau is responsible for making sure that the submitted books do not violate the religious, political, ideological, and moral

standards it promotes, hence its ideological control over the published material. Moreover, if books do not receive publication permits, they will not be published, which means that the translator will have no economic benefits from their sale and will not be awarded any status, as he/she receive no credit for the translation of an unpublished book.

The Regulations of Book Publishing (2001) limit the publication of books that are thought to have a negative effect on society. This includes books which are engaged in the “promotion and propagation of heresy and denial of religious principles” or “propagation of obscenity and moral corruption” (2001, p. 3, my translation). This way, the Book Bureau controls the publication process and imposes manipulations on books when they are thought to be violating the regulations.

3. Methodology

The corpus to be examined in this study consisted of a number of books which had once been announced ‘unprintable’ by the Book Bureau, but were given publication permits later and were eventually published in Iran. An earlier study (see Farahzad & Bolouri, 2014) revealed a list of eight novels which had been denied a publication permit at a certain period and were considered ‘unprintable’ by the Book Bureau. However, with a new administration coming to power in the country, five of the novels were given permits and published. One of them was translated by two different translators and published by two publishing houses. One translation was of a very low quality and in some instances one could not decide whether the manipulations were imposed by the Book Bureau or resulted from the translator’s lack of competence; this translation was excluded, and the rest were used as the corpus of the study:

- Miller, H. (2015). *Tropic of Cancer* (S. Somi, trans.). Ghoghnoos. (original work published 1934)
- Kerouac, J. (2015). *On the Road* (E. Norouzi, trans.). Cheshmeh. (original work published 1957)
- Kerouac, J. (2015). *On the Road* (Y. Azadbeigi, trans.). Kuleh Poshti. (original

work published 1957)

- Fitzgerald, F. S. (2014). *The Beautiful and Damned* (S. Somi, trans.). Ghoghnoos. (original work published 1922)
- Cain, J. 2014) *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (B. Rajabi, trans.). Cheshmeh. (original work published 1934)

The Postman Always Rings Twice, which was a short book, was examined from cover to cover. As for the two translations of *On the Road* and the translation of *The Beautiful and Damned*, the first 40 thousand words of the original books, and for the translation of *Tropic of Cancer*, the first 20 thousand words of the original book were examined. The reason was that the same manipulation patterns seemed to be repeating themselves and further analysis of the books did not seem to yield any new information on the manipulated concepts and strategies.

The translated and the original novels were compared sentence by sentence and all sentences containing any form of manipulation were extracted and tabulated. The manipulated concepts were codified and codes like ‘description of human body’, ‘alcoholic drinks’, ‘nudity’, ‘physical contact’, ‘sexual activity’ and ‘autoeroticism’ were specified. This way, a list of forbidden concepts that had been manipulated in the translated versions was prepared. Then, the manipulation strategies applied to the manipulated concepts were identified on the basis of Dukāte’s typology. After that, the corpus of the study was examined to find instances of translators’ attempts to evade the manipulation of the taboo concepts. To do this, every taboo concept that was expressed one way or another was specified. This included sentences in which the translators had chosen different words or had paraphrased the concepts or referred to them indirectly. Finally, such counter-manipulative strategies were classified and designated.

4. Results

In the analysis of the translated texts, 422 sentences containing manipulations were identified. Some sentences contained more than one, sometimes up to three, manipulations, so 467 instances of manipulation were found in the whole corpus of

the study.

4.1. Manipulated concepts and manipulative strategies

As stated above, the manipulations were codified to introduce a list of concepts that are considered forbidden by the Book Bureau and need to be manipulated one way or another. The manipulated concepts and the strategies applied to manipulate them were as follows:

Sexual activity: any references to sexual activity, including linguistic items denoting concepts like lovemaking or autoeroticism, or descriptions of such activities, were seriously manipulated. These concepts were mostly deleted, leaving no trace of such activities in the translated novels. Sentences like “When she lay there with her legs apart and moaning, even if she did moan that way for any and everybody, it was good, it was a proper show of feeling”, which describe a scene of sexual activity, were deleted. In other cases, linguistic elements denoting sexual activity were substituted with totally different elements. For example, the sentence “We went back to the barn; I made love to her under the tarantula” was rendered as “We went back to the barn; I proved my love to her under the tarantula”, which expresses a different idea from the one meant by the original sentence. Very few instances of references to sexual activity were attenuated.

Physical contact: references to any form of physical contact between the members of the opposite sex were, in most cases, manipulated. This includes linguistic elements which refer to actions like kissing, embracing, touching, pinching, holding hands, or putting arms around somebody. Such elements were mostly deleted, but in some cases they were substituted with words denoting different concepts. For example, the sentence “And he went over and kissed her several times” was rendered as “And he went over and looked at her affectionately”. In a few cases, however, words expressing physical contact between men and women were attenuated or left unmanipulated.

Human body: descriptions of the human body, particularly the female body, were among the most manipulated concepts found in the novels examined in this study. Most of the sentences containing linguistic items that denoted body members, genitals, and the like were deleted:

Example: Her eye was all black, and her breasts weren't drawn up and pointing up at me, but soft, and spread out in two big pink splotches. (*The Postman Always Rings Twice*)

In other cases, descriptions of the body parts were substituted; for example, in one of the translations of *On the Road*, the sentence "Her little shoulders drove me mad" was translated into "Her childish hands drove me mad". A few instances of attenuation of body descriptions were also spotted.

Extramarital and unlawful relationships: linguistic elements referring to concepts such as girlfriends/boyfriends, mistresses, going out with girls, womanizing, or out-of-marriage affairs were sometimes deleted or substituted with other elements. However, there were many references to such concepts that had been left unmanipulated.

Swear words: swear words were mostly attenuated, that is to say, they were expressed in a more polite language, which was thought to be less shocking to readers. For example, in *Tropic of Cancer*, the sentence "These rich cunts never think of a thing like that" is rendered as "These rich women never think of a thing like that"; that is to say, the translated sentence preserves the meaning of the original sentence, but expresses it in a more polite way. Only a few examples of swear words, mainly the ones that had to do with sexual activity, were deleted or substituted.

Prostitution: most references to prostitution in the novels examined in this study were attenuated to express the idea in a less shocking way. The narrator of *Tropic of Cancer*, for example, refers to a prostitute and describes her as follows: "As we stepped out of the hotel, I looked her over again in the harsh light of day and I saw clearly what a whore she was – the gold teeth, the geranium in her hat, the run-down heels, etc., etc." In the translated version, the word 'whore' is rendered as 'a fallen woman'. However, in some cases, particularly when references to prostitution are coupled with descriptions of sexual scenes, it is either deleted or substituted with another word. In one of the translations of *On the Road*, the word 'madam', meaning a procurer, is translated into 'a strong-willed woman'.

Nudity: most sentences describing nudity were either deleted or substituted. Sentences like "It was late at night, and we were upstairs, half undressed" or "I began

slipping off her blouse. ‘Rip me, Frank. Rip me like you did that night’” had been deleted. Meanwhile, references to nude men had a better chance of being left unmanipulated than sentences describing nudity in women.

Alcoholic drinks: words referring to alcoholic drinks, such as wine, whiskey, beer, and champagne, as well as words denoting concepts like bars, drinking, getting drunk, or references to liquor and booze, were mostly left unmanipulated in the examined novels, but there were instances of manipulation of such words in the corpus. In all translations, except one, most instances of reference to alcoholic drinks were freely rendered, and only a few manipulations were observed. In *The Beautiful and Damned*, however, most words denoting alcoholic drinks, intoxication, cabarets, bars, and the like were manipulated. The most frequent manipulation strategy for drinks was attenuation. For example, words like beer or wine were, in most cases, translated into ‘drink’.

Dancing: dancing was also a concept which was manipulated very inconsistently. There were many instances of the concept being translated without any manipulation. There were also cases where the word ‘dance’ was deleted or substituted with a different word. Most of these manipulations were also spotted in the novel *The Beautiful and Damned*, where a lot of dance parties are described. Referring to one of these parties, the narrator of the novel talks about the “music to which they had lately danced”, which is rendered as the “music to which they had listened a few minutes ago”.

Homoeroticism: There were not many instances of this concept in the examined novels. In a few cases, it was deleted or attenuated, and there were also a limited number of instances where the idea was translated without manipulation.

In addition to the above ten concepts, which were the most frequently manipulated concepts found in the examined novels, other manipulated concepts were also identified. Examples of such concepts were pornography, taboo bodily actions, references to female characters using the bathroom, entertaining a woman in one’s apartment, or, in some cases, even instances of the use of the word ‘bed’. Such elements were deleted, substituted, or sometimes attenuated in the translated versions. One reference to the word ‘Zionism’, describing a character as being

“interested in Zionism”, was deleted in the translated version of *Tropic of Cancer*. No instances of the use of the strategy ‘addition’ were identified.

Table 1 provides the details of the manipulated concepts and the manipulative strategies used in the novels examined in this study. It also illustrates instances of forbidden concepts which were not manipulated in the studied corpus.

Table 1
Manipulated Concepts and Manipulation Strategies

	Manipulation strategies	deletion	substitution	attenuation	non-manipulations
Manipulated concepts	Sexual activity	55	38	6	0
	Physical contact	67	33	2	17
	Human body relationships	65	15	7	0
	Swear words	7	9	0	31
	Prostitution	3	1	25	1
	Nudity	4	2	14	0
	Alcoholic drinks	10	3	0	3
	Dancing	7	10	32	156
	Homoeroticism	10	19	6	16
	Other	2	0	4	4
	Total	4	5	2	0
		234	135	98	228

4.2. Counter-Manipulative Strategies

Interestingly enough, the translators of these four novels had found creative ways of avoiding the imposed manipulations. In some cases, they had applied strategies to translate the original words by means of target language items that were less noticeable and consequently had a better chance of being ignored in the ‘examination’ process. These strategies were adopted with the aim of avoiding more serious manipulations that could be imposed on the translations by the Book Bureau. The counter-manipulative strategies were classified as follows:

Legitimization: This refers to a strategy that attempts to provide legitimacy for the actions described in the novels. In other words, it refers to a process whereby an act becomes legitimate by its attachment to the norms and values of the target society. For example, in the phrase “the men she used to go with around New York” (*The*

Beautiful and Damned), the word ‘men’ is rendered as ‘suitors’. This way their going out together is legitimized, as the norms often promoted formally in the Iranian society demand that a girl should not go out with a man she does not have an intimate, lawful relationship with, but it is OK if she goes out with her suitor, i.e., the man who intends to marry her. Or in one of the translations of the novel *On the Road*, the sentence “We picked up two girls” is translated into “We made the acquaintance of two young ladies”. Picking up girls, which is usually done with the intention of having sex with them, is a forbidden act and cannot appear in the translated novel. However, ‘making the acquaintance’ of somebody refers to a different situation that can be tolerated and at the same time keeps a trace of the idea expressed in the original text.

Archaism: this denotes a strategy that uses archaic or poetic words and, consequently, might enhance the chance of the original words being left unmanipulated. This, of course, makes the reading process more difficult and in some cases demands that the reader look up the archaic words in a dictionary in order to understand them. However, it is preferred to the total deletion or substitution of the forbidden concept. In the translation of the novel *Tropic of Cancer*, for example, an informal word referring to male genitals is rendered as ‘qazib’, which is an Arabic word used in old Persian. In one of the translations of *On the Road*, the word ‘girlfriend’ is rendered by means of poetic words such as ‘beloved’, ‘paramour’, or ‘mistress’. Another translation used the word ‘rot/rat’, an old Persian word meaning ‘nude, naked’, to refer to the concept of nudity.

Use of unfamiliar words: In some cases, the translators of the studied novels had resorted to using words that were less common and hence less recognizable by the ‘examiners’ at the Book Bureau. This would give such words and concepts a better chance of evading the imposed manipulations. Examples of such cases were the Persian words ‘pā[y]-andāz’, ‘hatak’, ‘našme’, ‘xāk-tu-sari’ used for translating the English words ‘pimp’, ‘ass’, ‘whore’, and ‘sex’ respectively.

Degenderization: this strategy was mainly used for eliminating any reference to either male or female gender and to neutralize the action described in terms of the genders involved in it. This way, the relationship between men and women could be

hidden from the eyes of the ‘examiners’ at the Book Bureau. In the Persian translation of *The Beautiful and Damned*, for example, the sentence “And then ever since she was twelve years old she’d had boys about her so thick” is rendered as “And then ever since she was twelve years old she’d had people of her own age around her”. By eliminating the word ‘boys’ and substituting the word ‘people’, the Persian translation only vaguely refers to the relationship between boys and girls, leaving it to smart readers to read such references between the lines.

Denunciation: In a few cases, the translated versions used a denunciatory wording to refer to the forbidden concepts, hoping that such wordings would persuade the ‘examiners’ to allow the concepts to be kept in the translation, as describing a taboo concept in a negative light would give a positive message to the readers. An example of such cases was referring to ‘sex’ as ‘that damned thing’, letting the context help the reader to understand what it refers to.

Borrowing: In one case, one of the translators had borrowed the taboo word and transliterated it in the Persian alphabet. The sentence “I am high, I have been drinking” was translated into “*Man high hastam, nushideh-am*”.

Table 2 provides the details of the above counter-manipulative strategies adopted by the translators of the novels examined in this study.

Table 2
Counter-Manipulative Strategies Used by Translators

Counter-manipulative strategies		Legitimization	Archaism	Unfamiliar words	Degenderalization	Denunciation	Borrowing
Manipulated concepts	Sexual activity	0	0	3	1	1	0
	Human body	0	1	1	0	0	0
	Relationships	7	8	0	8	0	0
	Prostitution	0	0	5	0	0	0
	Nudity	0	3	0	0	0	0
	Alcoholic drinks	0	0	0	0	3	1
	Total	7	12	9	9	4	1

5. Discussion

Two of the most frequently manipulated concepts found in the novels examined in this study were descriptions of 'sexual activity' and 'human body'. Ninety-three instances of reference to sex, sexual intercourse, or descriptions of scenes of sexual activity or autoeroticism (93.93% of the manipulations of the concept) were either deleted or substituted with different concepts. Only six instances of attenuation (6.06%) and no cases of non-manipulation of such references were identified. As for the descriptions of the human body, particularly the female body, 80 samples of deletion and substitution (91.95%) were identified, while a very limited number of such descriptions (seven instances, i.e., 8.04%) were found attenuated. There were no cases of non-manipulation of human body descriptions, either. It seems that there is a big taboo around these two concepts, and the Book Bureau strictly controls occurrences of sexual and physical descriptions in the novels that apply for print permits.

Any form of physical contact between members of the opposite sex is also among the frequently manipulated notions in the translated novels. The analysis revealed 100 cases of deletion and substitution (84.03%), i.e., two types of manipulation that remove all traces of the concept from the text. Examples of such physical contacts were actions like kissing, embracing, holding hands, touching, or putting one's arms around somebody. Only two instances of attenuation (i.e., 1.68%) were identified. However, there were 17 samples of this concept (i.e., 14.28%) that were left unmanipulated in the examined novels.

Extramarital and unlawful relationships (e.g., out-of-marriage affairs, infidelity among spouses, going out with girls, or references to words such as boyfriend and girlfriend), as long as there were only references to them and such references contained no description of the details of the relationships, were mostly left unmanipulated (65.95%). However, when the most intimate scenes of the relationships were described, they were severely manipulated. Sixteen instances of deletion or substitution of these elements (34.04%) were found in the corpus.

References to nudity, taking off clothes, or undressing somebody were strictly manipulated. 81.25% of such references were either deleted or substituted. A few instances of mentioning nudity (18.75%) were left unmanipulated. However, these

unmanipulated samples denoted nudity in men rather than nudity in women. Words referring to 'prostitution' were, in most cases (70%), attenuated; that is to say, the concept was kept, but was expressed in a more polite way. Six references to 'prostitution' (30%) were deleted or substituted with different ideas.

Swear words were mostly attenuated; 83.33% of occurrences of swear words were expressed in a more polite language. Only a few cases of deletion or substitution were identified. In one case, a very derogatory swear word was translated without manipulation. Linguistic elements denoting 'homosexualism' were left unmanipulated in four cases, attenuated in four other cases, and deleted in two sentences.

Manipulation of words referring to alcoholic drinks and dancing was very inconsistent. In most cases (76.09%), references to alcoholic drinks, bars, or drunkenness were not manipulated and were allowed to appear exactly as they had in the original texts. Only a few instances of deletion or substitution of this concept (8.29%) were spotted in the corpus. Four of the translations had the words denoting alcoholic drinks unmanipulated in most cases. In one translation (i.e., *The Beautiful and Damned*), however, all references to drinks were manipulated. Most of these manipulations appeared in the form of attenuations. For example, words such as beer or wine were rendered as 'drink'. There were also instances of deletion or substitution of alcoholic drinks or related words in this translation. In one case, for example, the word 'cabaret' was translated into 'theater building'. Words referring to 'dancing' were deleted or substituted in 56.86% of cases. Most of these cases were also found in the translation of *The Beautiful and Damned*, a novel that abounds with dance parties. In the other four translations examined in this study, references to dancing were mostly left unmanipulated.

Although manipulations are frequently imposed and many instances of reference to forbidden concepts are deleted, substituted, or in some cases attenuated, translators, or probably editors and publishers, sometimes apply certain strategies as a means of evading manipulations. Forty-two instances of such counter-manipulative strategies were identified in the corpus of the study; there were 12 cases of using archaic or poetic words, as well as nine instances of resorting to unfamiliar, less-known words,

to express the concept in the original text. Mainly to deal with words or sentences denoting relationships between men and women, the translators had found creative ways of legitimizing the unlawful relationships. In other cases, they had used linguistic items that degeneralized the action expressed in a scene, so that an unlawful relationship would not be very noticeable.

6. Conclusion

It seems that moral issues, or rather the formal perceptions of morality and immorality, are among the most frequently manipulated concepts found in translated literary works published in contemporary Iran. The Book Bureau, as the 'patronage' responsible for controlling the publishing industry, is very concerned about ideas which are considered taboo according to the country's formally encouraged code of ethics. Examples of such taboo concepts are references to, or any descriptions of, sexual activity, nudity, human body parts, physical contact between the members of the opposite sex, or unlawful relationships among men and women. Such concepts are, in most cases, manipulated in such a way as to eliminate all traces of them from the published fictional work.

Other concepts, such as alcoholic drinks or dancing, are tolerated to a greater extent, and in many cases translators and publishers are allowed to refer to these concepts in their translations. Not many instances of politically or religiously sensitive items were found in the examined corpus, but a dialog like "– God is up there laughing at us. – The hell he is. Well we are laughing at him too, aren't we?" was left unmanipulated, which shows that religious or political issues are not the focus of the 'examiners' when they deal with fictional works. The 'examiners' who work on novels or short story collections might not even look for these concepts and only call for manipulations if they happen to notice them. Such concepts are probably focused on more specifically when books about religion or politics are 'examined'. Analyzing books of different genres can yield valuable information on the concepts manipulated and the manipulative strategies used in those areas. This can be the subject of future studies dealing with the concept of manipulation in translated texts.

Another point worth noticing is that some degree of inconsistency was found in

the manipulation of the taboo concepts in the corpus of the study. Although some concepts like sexual activity or nudity were, in most cases, deleted or substituted with different ideas, one was able to find many instances of other taboo concepts being left unmanipulated in the examined books. A word or concept that was manipulated in one book happened to be freely translated in another book. In fact, sometimes a linguistic item referring to a banned concept was manipulated on some pages of a book but not on other pages of the same book. Looking for the reasons behind such inconsistencies in the manipulation of translated books can also be the focus of future studies, which can combine textual analysis with research instruments such as questionnaires or interviews with the publishers, translators, or other agents involved in the publication process.

The interesting point is that when manipulations are imposed on writers and rewriters of literature, they find new creative ways of expressing the oft-manipulated concepts without drawing the attention of the ‘examiners’ working for the Book Bureau. The examples found in this study revealed that some strategies adopted by translators to escape manipulation are the use of archaic or less familiar words or transliterating the original word in the target alphabet without translating it. In other cases, they introduced trivial changes in the translated texts, hoping that the readers of their translations could take the hint and eventually get the point on the basis of the context around the intended word. A study specifically focusing on translators’ creative ways of evading manipulation is of great importance, as it can raise awareness about the translators’ resistance to censorship. What is more, when manipulation becomes the norm, a certain language is developed among translators and their readers, which can serve as a ‘lingua franca’ to speak the ‘unspeakable’. Readers of translated literature in Iran have, little by little, learned that ‘to be with somebody’, for example, means ‘to have an affair with somebody’. They know that, in translations published under a censorship mechanism, the old Persian word ‘*nār*’, or even vague references to ‘*barjastegi-hāyash*’, represent the word ‘breast’, or the word ‘drink’ in a foreign novel would definitely refer to ‘alcoholic drinks’. Such references to the forbidden concepts are beyond the control of the censors.

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