

Translating Confessional Difference: Eco's Semiotic Hermeneutics in Two Persian Translations of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Marzieh Malekshahi  

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of English, Damghan University, Damghan, Iran.
Email: m.malekshahi@du.ac.ir

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ABSTRACT

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) traces the religious crisis of Stephen Dedalus, an Irish boy shaped by Roman Catholic doctrine. This article examines how the novel's confessional narrative is translated into Persian for readers whose interpretive horizon is shaped by Shia Islam. It compares Parviz Daryush's 1991 translation with Manouchehr Badiee's 2001 retranslation. Drawing on Umberto Eco's semiotic hermeneutics, particularly *intention operis*, unlimited semiosis oriented toward a final interpretant, and the distinction between interpreting and using a text, the study develops a framework for evaluating how each translation negotiates confessional distance. Analysis of seven passages suggests that Badiee's substitution of Islamic theological vocabulary for Catholic concepts often exceeds the interpretive possibilities permitted by the text's internal logic, although his endnotes partly recover the meanings displaced in the main text. Daryush, by contrast, preserves the foreignness of Catholic concepts but sacrifices some intelligibility.

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Corresponding Author: m.malekshahi@du.ac.ir

Introduction

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* follows its protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, from the sensory confusions of early childhood through the disciplined and frightening world of a Jesuit boarding school, into adolescence, sexual awakening, religious terror, and finally a deliberate turning away from the priesthood toward art. The novel's five chapters trace a single arc of formation and rebellion, in which a pious child is educated into the doctrines and rituals of Roman Catholicism, transgresses against them, is terrified by their account of eternal punishment, briefly submits to a renewed devotion, and ultimately rejects the vocation his teachers hope he will choose, leaving for the continent to become a writer instead (Gifford, 1982). None of this is intelligible without the specific theological architecture in which it occurs. The difference between venial and mortal sin, the doctrine of sanctifying grace and its loss, the sacrament of confession and the conditions for valid absolution, and the eternal consequences attached to unrepented sin are not background detail. They are the categories through which Stephen experiences himself, and the novel cannot be read, or translated, without them remaining legible as such.

This article examines what happens when this confessionally specific narrative is rendered into Persian. Two translations are at stake: Parviz Daryush's 1991 translation, published as *Sima-ye mard-e honaravar dar javani*, and Manouchehr Badiee's 2001 retranslation (cited here from its 2006 edition; see Section 3.1), published as *Chehre-ye mard-e honarmand dar javani* and awarded Iran's prize for best translation in 2002. Persian readers of either translation inhabit a religious horizon shaped overwhelmingly by Shia Islam. Persian religious vocabulary has historically been strongly shaped by Islamic, and particularly Shia, traditions. Shia Islam shares certain moral vocabulary with Catholicism, including concepts of sin, repentance, and divine grace, while organizing these concepts within a substantially different theological structure. The translator of Joyce's novel into Persian therefore faces a problem that is not reducible to ordinary cultural difference. It is a problem of doctrinal incommensurability, in which apparently similar concepts may carry incompatible implications.

Daryush's and Badiee's translations of *Portrait* have been examined in a study (Malekshahi, 2009), which analyzed micro-level intertextual references, understood as culture-specific items, and classified the strategies used for them on a continuum from domestication (deletion, limited and absolute universalization, naturalization, standard translation) to foreignization (orthographic adaptation, linguistic translation, extratextual gloss, literal translation). That study found both translations to be domesticating and foreignizing in different degrees. Badiee's later translation proved the more domesticated of the two, which does not support the retranslation hypothesis, and the retranslators' extratextual apparatus emerged as a prominent feature. Its unit of analysis, however, was the individual item, and its question was how far each rendering approaches or departs from the source culture. Religious items, though included, were treated like all other items, as instances of a general strategy typology and not as components of a Catholic conceptual system in which sin, grace, confession, absolution, and eternal punishment depend on one another. Nor did that study ask what happens to this interdependence when it is rendered into a Shia-inflected religious lexicon, or whether the translators'

choices remain answerable to constraints internal to the source text. This article addresses that gap by moving from the item to the system and from a strategy typology to an evaluative question grounded in Eco's *intentio operis*.

Umberto Eco's semiotic hermeneutics, developed across several decades of work beginning with his early writings on textual openness and continuing through his later studies of interpretation and translation, offers an unusually well-suited set of tools for evaluating how a translator handles this kind of problem. Eco's central claim is that a text constrains its own legitimate interpretation through what he calls the *intentio operis*, a semiotic strategy inscribed in the text's internal coherence and its historical situatedness, and that this constraint is neither identical to what the author meant nor reducible to whatever a reader wishes to find there (Eco, 1994). Eco insists, against both naive authorial intention criticism and against what he sees as an unconstrained reader response, that some readings are simply incompatible with what a text projects, however creative or culturally accommodating they may be. This article uses that framework to ask a focused question. When Daryush and Badiee render Joyce's Catholic theological vocabulary into Persian, do their choices remain answerable to the *intentio operis* of the source text, or do they substitute a different confessional logic for the one the novel constructs.

Eco's Hermeneutics: From the Sign to the Limits of Interpretation

Against Saussure: The Turn to Peirce

Eco's semiotics begins with a deliberate departure from the Saussurean model that had dominated structuralist linguistics. For Saussure, the sign is a closed relation between a signifier and a signified, a relation that is arbitrary, internally differential, and synchronically stable. The signified is a mental concept rather than a thing in the world, and the system achieves its explanatory power by setting aside any direct relation to external reality (Chandler, 2007). Eco follows Charles Sanders Peirce instead, for whom a sign, or representamen, is something that stands for an object in some respect, producing in the mind of an interpreter an equivalent or more developed sign called the interpretant (Peirce, 1931-1935/1958, as cited in Chandler, 2007). Three consequences follow from this choice. First, the interpreter is built into the structure of signification itself, since for Peirce semiosis does not occur unless some mind perceives and experiences it (Short, 2007). Second, Peirce's object, while not confined to physical things, reintroduces a dimension of reference to the world that Saussure's model had excluded (Chandler, 2007). Third, and most significant for what follows, the interpretant is itself a sign capable of generating further interpretants, so that signification becomes an open chain rather than a closed pair. Rezvan (2024) likewise recalls that the founding of modern semiotics is usually credited to both Peirce and Saussure, with Peirce treating semiotics as a framework encompassing all the sciences and Saussure making language its central system, and that the French tradition that followed Saussure built on a structuralist linguistic model. Eco's turn to Peirce can be read as a choice for the first of these orientations.

This open chain is what Peirce, and following him Eco, call unlimited semiosis. Each interpretant can become the starting point for a new act of signification, and in principle this process has no terminus. Poststructuralist thinkers, Derrida above all, took this feature as support for the view that meaning is

always postponed and never settles. Derrida credited Peirce with going furthest toward rejecting the idea that interpretation can ever reach a final, fixed meaning and stop there (Derrida, 1967/1977, as cited in Sojodi, 2009).

Eco's disagreement with this reading is precise and, for the purposes of this article, decisive. He accepts that semiosis in Peirce's sense is unlimited, but denies that unlimited means directionless. Each interpretant, on Eco's reading of Peirce, says something more about the object than the interpretant before it, not merely something different (Nojomial, 2015). The chain of interpretants is oriented, however asymptotically, toward what Peirce called the final interpretant, the stable interpretation a community of interpreters converges upon over time (Short, 2007). The mechanism of this convergence is habit. Peirce defines habit as whatever causes an interpreter to draw one inference rather than another from a given set of premises, whether that habit is innate or acquired (Short, 2007), and it is habit, not individual caprice, that governs which interpretants a sign can legitimately produce within a given community. If a sign does not directly disclose its object, the long run process of semiosis will still tend to produce a shared concept of that object on which the community settles, a concept the community comes to treat as the object's true meaning. A semiotics worthy of the name, Eco argues, must therefore be able to set aside mistaken interpretations in order to build principled knowledge from those that succeed, and in doing so it approaches, even if it never finally reaches, a settled interpretant (Short, 2007).

For translation studies, the distinction carries an immediate consequence. Unlimited semiosis explains why a single source text can generate more than one defensible translation, and why retranslation is not a failure of an earlier translation but an expected feature of how texts are read over time. The orientation of semiosis toward a final interpretant, sustained by communal habit rather than individual whim, explains why not every translation is equally defensible. Some interpretants move the chain of meaning forward in a way the text's own structure supports, while others depart from it. The task of a hermeneutically informed translation criticism is to distinguish between the two.

Three Intentions and the Authority of the Text

Eco operationalizes this distinction through his account of three kinds of intention that might, in principle, govern the interpretation of a text. The *intentio auctoris* is the empirical author's own intention, what the historical person who wrote the work meant by it. Eco treats this intention as methodologically inaccessible. We cannot recover an author's state of mind, and even direct authorial testimony is only one piece of evidence among others, not a final court of appeal (Eco, 1994). The *intentio lectoris* is what a reader infers from a text on the basis of that reader's own expectations, desires, and beliefs. Eco does not deny that readers do this, but he denies that the *intentio lectoris* alone can serve as a criterion of legitimate interpretation, since a reading governed entirely by what a reader wishes to find may have no real connection to the text at all. The reader's part in making meaning is not peculiar to Eco. Hasanpour and Golestani (2025), discussing Barthes, describe the reader as necessary to the creation of meaning in written texts and note that Barthes's notion of anchorage assigns certain signs in the text the function of preventing meaning from floating (Hasanpour & Golestani, 2025).

The third intention, the *intentio operis*, is what the text itself, considered as a semiotic structure, projects independently of either the author's psychology or the reader's desires. It is not a hidden, fixed meaning waiting to be excavated, but a set of constraints inscribed in the text's internal coherence and its historical and cultural situation, constraints that limit which interpretations can be considered legitimate (Crisafulli, 2004). Eco identifies two kinds of criteria by which the *intentio operis* can be recognized. Intra-textual criteria rest on internal coherence, since an interpretation of one part of a text is acceptable only if another part of the same text does not contradict it, and the internal coherence of the text controls what would otherwise be the unconstrained drives of the reader (Eco, 1990). Extra-textual criteria rest on historical and cultural situatedness, since an interpretation that ignores or contradicts the conventions and codes operative when and where the text was produced cannot be defended simply because a reader finds it appealing (Crisafulli, 2004). Eco's own worked example of this second criterion concerns the interpretation of medieval texts: a reading of a medieval poem that imported a post-Romantic notion of subjective interiority foreign to medieval poetics would violate the extra-textual criterion even if no single line of the poem contradicted it on internal grounds alone, because the interpretation would be answerable to a literary code that did not yet exist at the time of the text's composition (Eco, 1990). The extra-textual criterion, in other words, asks not whether an interpretation is internally consistent but whether it is consistent with the historically situated codes, conventions, and bodies of knowledge that a text of this kind, in this period, could be expected to draw upon and could be expected to be read against. This criterion does much of the evaluative work in the analysis of Biblical allusion in Section 4.5 below, where the question is not whether a given Persian phrase is internally coherent but whether it connects to the specific scriptural and liturgical tradition the source text presupposes.

Eco's position with respect to deconstruction is therefore neither full agreement nor flat rejection. He shares the deconstructionist conviction that interpretation cannot rest on recovering the author's psychological intention. But he resists the further step, taken by some deconstructionist critics, of concluding that no textual constraint survives once authorial intention is set aside. Even the most radical exponents of deconstruction, Eco observes, admit that some interpretations are plainly unacceptable, and this admission already concedes that the text imposes limits on its interpreters (Eco, 1994). Interpretation, on Eco's account, is the result of an ongoing negotiation between the *intentio operis* and the *intentio lectoris*, in which the text sets the boundaries within which a reader's engagement can range (Crisafulli, 2004).

Eco draws a further distinction that bears directly on the analysis below, namely the distinction between interpreting a text and using it. A reader may legitimately use a text for purposes that have little to do with what the text itself projects, drawing inspiration from it, repurposing it for an unrelated cultural context, or treating it as raw material for a new creation. Eco illustrates the point with his own example. He might use a poem by Wordsworth as a model for imitation, or as an illustration of how a single text can be read within different cultural frameworks, or simply as a private source of inspiration, but if he wishes to interpret the Wordsworth poem, he is obliged to respect its own linguistic and cultural

background (Eco, 1990). A translator who consistently substitutes a text's cultural and conceptual world for one of the translator's own choosing is, in these terms, using the text rather than interpreting it, no matter how skillful or creative the substitution may be.

Importantly, however, the *intentio operis* should not be understood as an objectively recoverable meaning that the researcher can establish once and for all. In the present study, the reconstruction of the *intentio operis* is itself an interpretive hypothesis, grounded in textual coherence, the novel's historical and confessional context, and the range of interpretations made available by the text. Like any hypothesis, it can be tested against the text and revised where the text resists it, which is what distinguishes it from a reading imposed on the novel.

Translation as Visible Interpretation

Eco's most direct engagement with translation builds on this hermeneutic foundation. He observes that an ordinary act of reading leaves interpretation largely internal and unstated, while translation makes that same interpretive act explicit and consequential. A translation objectifies and renders manifest the translator's understanding of a text in a way few other interpretive practices do (Crisafulli, 2004). This is why Crisafulli (2004) describes translation studies as an unusually appropriate field in which to test the validity of Eco's hermeneutic theory, since nowhere else are interpretive choices so fully exposed to scrutiny, and nowhere else do they carry such direct consequences for what a reader who does not know the source language will be able to know about a text. The hermeneutic tradition makes a parallel point: as Dabaghi and Panahabar (2014) show, Gadamer holds that every translation is at once an interpretation, and Ricoeur treats understanding itself as a kind of translation.

Eco's account of translation as negotiation extends this insight. Some loss is unavoidable in any translation, and the translator must decide what may be sacrificed in order to preserve what matters more (Eco, 2003). What counts as more or less important in this negotiation, on Eco's account, is not a matter of the translator's preference but a question to be answered by attending to the *intentio operis*. What the text's own structure marks as central cannot be freely traded away, while what the text marks as peripheral can be. A translator who repeatedly sacrifices what the *intentio operis* identifies as central, in favor of fluency, cultural familiarity, or the translator's own interpretive convictions, has moved from interpretation into what Eco and, following him, Crisafulli (2004) call overinterpretation, an imposition of the *intentio lectoris* where the *intentio operis* ought to govern.

This last point distinguishes Eco's account from the manipulation-oriented theories that have been influential elsewhere in translation studies. Manipulation theory holds that all translation inevitably distorts its source, an inevitability usually attributed to the translator's ideological position, but this position generates an internal difficulty. If no stable textual meaning is in principle accessible, there is nothing for the translator's choices to have manipulated, and the very term loses its content (Crisafulli, 2004). Overinterpretation, by contrast, presupposes that a text does constrain its interpretation, and identifies a specific failure, namely the substitution of the interpreter's own framework for constraints the text itself supplies. The analysis that follows treats Joyce's Catholic theological vocabulary as a stringent

test of this distinction, because the constraints in question are not merely cultural preferences but doctrinal commitments embedded in the text's narrative logic.

Method

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is an unusually demanding test of Eco's framework because its confessional content is not decorative but structural, at least in the seven passages examined in this article. Stephen's encounter with a prostitute in Chapter 2 places him in a state the novel repeatedly names as mortal sin. His terror during the retreat sermons of Chapter 3 derives directly from Catholic teaching on judgment and damnation. His confession and temporary peace in the same chapter depend on the sacramental logic of absolution. His refusal of the priesthood in Chapter 4, followed by his departure for the continent in Chapter 5, only carries the weight Joyce intends if the reader understands what kind of vocation, and what kind of eternal stakes, Stephen is turning away from. To translate these elements is not simply to choose between a familiar or an unfamiliar phrase. It is to decide whether the target language reader will be given access to the specific doctrinal logic on which the narrative depends, or will instead be given a different logic that happens to occupy similar territory.

Corpus Selection

The corpus consists of seven cases drawn from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the corresponding renderings in Daryush's and Badi'ee's translations. Six of the cases are single passages; the first, on mortal sin, comprises two. The cases fall into three groups: doctrinal terms (mortal sin, sanctifying grace, and the unseen paraclete), ritual objects (the boat bearer and the font), and scriptural allusions (the order of Melchizedek and the Beatitudes). In each, a specific element of Catholic doctrine, practice, or scripture carries weight in the narrative and has to be rendered for a reader whose religious horizon is shaped by Shia Islam. The source text is quoted from Joyce (1973). Daryush's translation is cited from the 1991 Asatir edition. Badi'ee's translation was first published in 2001; all quotations and page references in this article are to its later edition, published by Niloofar in 2006 (Joyce, 2006), which contains the endnotes and afterword discussed in Section 4.

Analytical Procedure

Each case was analysed in three steps, which Section 4 follows in the same order. First, the *intentio operis* of the passage was reconstructed as an interpretive hypothesis, using the intra-textual criterion (the passage's coherence with the rest of the novel) and the extra-textual criterion (the doctrinal, liturgical, and scriptural codes the source text presupposes), drawing on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* where the passage calls on them. Second, each translator's rendering was treated as an interpretant generated by the source text and examined for which community's habit of inference it activates in a Persian reader, and where that habit leads. Persian lexical associations were checked against the Dehkhoda Dictionary and, for scriptural names, against the standard Persian Bible translation. Third, where a rendering departs from the *intentio operis*, the departure was classified either as a negotiation, in which something inessential is sacrificed to preserve something essential, or as

using the text in Eco's sense. The translators' endnotes and afterword were read alongside the body text and treated as a separate register, and their statements about their own practice were treated as evidence to be weighed against the renderings themselves.

Evaluation Criteria

A rendering is judged against four questions drawn from Section 2. Does it remain coherent with the passages elsewhere in the novel on which the passage depends (the intra-textual criterion)? Is it consistent with the historical, doctrinal, and scriptural codes the source presupposes (the extra-textual criterion)? Does the interpretant it generates connect to an existing communal habit in Persian, and is that the habit the source text requires or that of a different tradition? And what does the rendering sacrifice, and is that peripheral or central to the passage (negotiation versus use)? These judgments are interpretive and are argued from the text of each case. As Section 5 observes, the criteria exclude indefensible readings more readily than they rank defensible ones.

Scope and Limits

This study does not claim to evaluate either translation as a whole. Its findings concern the seven cases examined and the treatment of Catholic doctrinal, ritual, and scriptural material within them. The translators' endnotes and afterword are considered only where they bear on these cases; the study does not assess the apparatus as a whole. The findings cannot be extended to other aspects of the translations, such as style, register, or other culture-specific items, nor to the translators' work beyond this novel.

The Two Translators and Their Stated Positions

The two translations under examination here, Daryush's 1991 *Sima-ye mard-e honaravar dar javani* and Badiee's 2001 *Chehre-ye mard-e honarmand dar javani*, differ markedly in how they approach this decision, and the difference is documented in statements the translators themselves have made in print, though these statements should be treated as evidence to be weighed against the translations' actual choices rather than as a settled account of either translator's practice. In December 2002, the periodical *Ketab-e Mah-e Adabiyat va Falsafe* convened a published session devoted to Badiee's retranslation, with the critics Saleh Hosseini and Payandeh and with Badiee himself present. Asked by Payandeh how he had handled the novel's dense religious vocabulary without specialist theological training, Badiee replied that he had faced no difficulty, because the central images of the text, including its account of hell, its retreat scenes, and related matters, struck him as surprisingly similar to the corresponding elements of his own religious upbringing, and he stated directly that he had never found any difference between the rituals mentioned in the text and those of Islam, including Shia practice specifically ("Roman-i Bed'at-gozar," 2003, p. 20, my translation). This remark, made in response to a specific question in a roundtable setting rather than offered as a programmatic statement, suggests an underlying assumption of equivalence between the two confessional worlds rather than confirming that Badiee applied this assumption consistently throughout the translation.

Daryush's translation makes no comparable declaration of interpretive principle. His choices tend toward renderings that preserve the foreignness of Catholic concepts, sometimes producing collocations

that are grammatically intelligible in Persian but semantically unfamiliar, and he supplies little of the contextual explanation that would make these foreign concepts accessible to a reader without prior knowledge of Catholic doctrine. Where Badiee's risk is the importation of an alien confessional framework into the body of the translation, Daryush's risk is a different one, namely rendering Catholic concepts so literally that their meaning remains closed to the reader who needs the translation precisely because Catholic doctrine is unfamiliar to them. Both risks are treated below as working hypotheses to be tested against the passages, not as conclusions.

Analysis: Catholic Doctrine Under Translation

Each subsection below follows the same analytical sequence. First, it identifies what the intra-textual and extra-textual criteria mark as belonging to the *intentio operis* of the passage in question. Second, it treats each translator's rendering as an interpretant the source text has generated, and asks which community's habit of inference that interpretant connects to and whether that habit leads toward a final interpretant the text's own internal coherence and historical situation support. Third, where a translator's choice departs from the *intentio operis*, it asks whether this is better described as a defensible negotiation, in which something inessential is sacrificed to preserve something essential, or as an instance of using the text, in Eco's specific sense, where the translator's own framework has displaced the constraints the text supplies.

Mortal Sin and the Architecture of Spiritual Death

Stephen's encounter with a prostitute initiates a prolonged period the novel twice describes in the specific vocabulary of mortal sin. In Catholic doctrine, mortal sin is a category for sin grave enough in its matter, committed with full enough knowledge, and deliberate enough in its consent, to destroy the divine life within the soul and place the sinner in danger of eternal damnation unless that sin is confessed and absolved (Catholic Church, 2000, paras. 1855-1861). The intra-textual criterion is what makes this doctrinal background indispensable rather than merely informative: the novel's account of Stephen's later confession and temporary relief, in the same chapter, is constructed as the direct reversal of this earlier state, so that one passage cannot be read correctly unless the other has already been understood in specifically Catholic terms. The *intentio operis* of the two passages below is therefore not negotiable in the way that a piece of incidental cultural detail might be. It is the hinge on which the chapter's narrative logic turns.

Table 1. Two Passages Naming Mortal Sin

Source text (Joyce, 1973)	Daryush translation (Joyce,	
	1991)	Badiee translation (Joyce, 2006)
"He cared little that he was in mortal sin" (Joyce, 1973, p. 248)	گناه فنا Joyce, 1991, p. 123	گناه کبیره Joyce, 2006, p. 131
"He had sinned mortally not once but many times... he stood in danger of eternal damnation" (Joyce, 1973, p. 137)	گناه مهلك Joyce, 1991, p. 129	گناه کبیره Joyce, 2006, p. 137, with explanatory endnote

Daryush's two renderings, *gonah-e fana* and *gonah-e mohlek*, can be read in Eco's terms as interpretants that extend the chain of semiosis only weakly. Each is generated by the source text in the sense that it responds to the gravity the English phrase conveys, but each fails the habit criterion Eco borrows from Peirce, since neither phrase belongs to an existing community habit of theological reference in Persian. A Persian reader has no established interpretive habit to apply to *gonah-e fana*, and so the chain of interpretants effectively stalls at this point rather than advancing toward a final interpretant that would let the reader draw further, doctrinally informed inferences from it. The negotiation Daryush has made is at least a coherent one within Eco's framework: he has sacrificed accessibility in order to avoid importing a competing theology, which is a defensible trade against the *intentio operis* even if it leaves the passage underdetermined for the reader.

Badiee's *gonah-e kabire* is a stronger interpretant in one specific respect and a weaker one in another. It is stronger because it activates an existing communal habit, the Islamic jurisprudential category of grave sin, which Persian readers already possess as an interpretive resource. But the habit it activates is the wrong one for this text, because the habit governing *gonah-e kabire* in Persian does not include the specific doctrinal content the intra-textual criterion requires here, namely the idea that this category of sin destroys a particular kind of grace and severs a particular kind of relationship with God, a concept absent from the Islamic category as such. In Eco's vocabulary, the interpretant Badiee's choice generates moves the chain of semiosis toward a final interpretant the text does not license, since the destination, an Islamic theological understanding of grave sin, is not where this novel's own semiotic strategy is heading. This is not a case of legitimate negotiation, where something peripheral is traded for something central, because what is sacrificed here, namely the specifically Catholic soteriological mechanism, is precisely what the intra-textual criterion identifies as central to the passage. It is closer to what Eco calls using a text: the translator has substituted his own community's habitual interpretant for the one the text's internal coherence requires, much as Eco's own example of reading Wordsworth strictly through one's personal frame of reference would constitute use rather than interpretation (Eco, 1990).

Badiee's accompanying endnote, which lists the traditional seven mortal sins and explains that an unconfessed mortal sin condemns the soul to eternal damnation (Joyce, 2006, p. 347), supplies exactly the extra-textual information the body text's interpretant lacks. But the endnote cannot retroactively redirect a chain of semiosis that the body text has already set in motion. A reader's first encounter with *gonah-e kabire* activates the Islamic habit before any endnote intervenes. Eco's account of semiosis treats it as a temporally extended process in which each interpretant conditions what follows. On this account, a correction supplied later in the reading process does not simply cancel the direction already taken. The translation, at this point, negotiates with the text in two different currencies at once, conceding the *intentio operis* in the body and attempting to redeem it in the apparatus.

Sanctifying Grace and the Risk of Apparent Equivalence

A more difficult case arises where Catholic and Islamic vocabularies appear to overlap rather than diverge, and where this apparent overlap is itself the product of habit in Eco's Peircean sense. Sanctifying

grace is, in Catholic doctrine, the supernatural life of God within the soul, received at baptism, lost through mortal sin, and restored through sacramental absolution (Catholic Church, 2000, paras. 1999-2000, 2023-2024). The passage in question describes Stephen's days, works, and thoughts as incapable of making atonement for him, because the fountains of sanctifying grace have ceased to refresh his soul (Joyce, 1973). The extra-textual criterion situates this image precisely: the retreat that precipitates Stephen's crisis draws explicitly on the genre of Catholic spiritual exercises associated with Ignatius of Loyola, which structure meditation around the particular judgment, death, and the four last things as a means of provoking exactly this kind of crisis of conscience (Ignatius of Loyola, 1548/2021). The *intentio operis* of the passage is therefore inseparable from this specific devotional genre, not from a general idea of divine favor.

Table 2. Sanctifying Grace

Source text (Joyce, 1973)	Daryush translation (Joyce, 1991)	Badiee translation (Joyce, 2006)
"the fountains of sanctifying grace having ceased to refresh his soul" (Joyce, 1973, p. 251)	موهبت تبرئه از گناه Joyce, 1991, p. 129. A neutral phrase conveying absolution from sin without invoking a specific theological tradition	فيض مقدس Joyce, 2006, p. 137, with an explanatory endnote.

Daryush's *mowhebat-e tabre'e az gonah*, the gift of absolution from sin, is a weak interpretant in Eco's sense for a different reason than the previous example. It does not activate any strong existing habit at all, Catholic or Islamic, and so it under-determines the passage rather than redirecting it. Read against Eco's account of negotiation, this is a recognizable, if imperfect, trade: imprecision is sacrificed in place of false specificity, and what survives, however thinly, is at least the signal that a foreign and not a domestic theology is at stake. The chain of semiosis is weakened but not pointed in the wrong direction.

Badiee's *feyz-e moqaddas* presents the harder case for Eco's framework, because it is a strong interpretant pointing toward the wrong final interpretant, and it is strong precisely because of genuine overlap between two communities of habit. The term *feyz* carries an established habit in Sufi mystical vocabulary as well as a broader, looser sense of divine blessing, and Dehkhoda's Dictionary defines *feyz-e moghaddas* specifically in the technical language of Sufi emanationist metaphysics, as the celestial manifestations through which latent potentialities are brought into existence ("feyz", n.d.), a definition rooted in an ontology of divine names and their unfolding that has no counterpart in Catholic sacramental theology. Because this habit is well established in Persian religious and literary culture, the interpretant it generates is unusually persuasive, in the specific sense that a reader will readily supply further interpretants consistent with Sufi emanationism, extending the chain of semiosis fluently and without apparent difficulty. This fluency is exactly what makes the choice an instance of using the text rather than negotiating with it. Negotiation, on Eco's account, trades a less essential feature for a more essential one within a single *intentio operis*; here, an entire alternative metaphysics, complete with its own internally coherent habits of inference, has been substituted for the source text's own. The passage's specific

imagery, fountains that have ceased to refresh, depends for its force on the Catholic conception of sanctifying grace as a living, renewing presence that mortal sin has blocked, an image that the Sufi emanationist framework can certainly accommodate on its own terms, but only by answering a question the source text is not asking.

What this example illustrates, more clearly than the previous one, is that the danger Eco's framework helps to identify is not proportional to a translation choice's apparent foreignness. A weak interpretant that fails to connect, like Daryush's, leaves the chain of semiosis stalled but pointed in roughly the right direction. A strong interpretant that connects easily, like Badiee's, can carry the chain confidently toward a final interpretant the source text's own historical and doctrinal situation does not support, and it is precisely the strength of the available habit, the fluency with which further inferences can be drawn from feyz-e moqaddas within Persian religious culture, that makes this direction so difficult for an ordinary reader to notice or resist.

Ritual Objects: The Boat Bearer and the Font

Joyce's Catholic world is enacted through specific ritual objects and roles as much as through doctrinal vocabulary, and these objects test a different part of Eco's framework, since their meaning depends less on doctrinal proposition than on the ritual function a community's habits assign to a physical thing.

Table 3. The Boat Bearer

Source text (Joyce, 1973)	Daryush translation (Joyce, 1991)	Badiee translation (Joyce, 2006)
"He remembered the summer evening he had been there to be dressed as a boat bearer, the evening of the procession to the little altar in the wood" (Joyce, 1973, p. 203)	حامل بخورسوز Joyce, 1991, p. 50. Literally, "carrier of the incense burner"	بچه‌های اسپند یادمست Joyce, 2006, p. 59. Literally, "children with wild rue in hand"

The boat bearer carries the vessel of incense in a Catholic liturgical procession, an act of worship and sanctification within the Catholic ritual system, and the intra-textual criterion is satisfied here by the scene's own narrative placement: Stephen's boyhood participation in this procession is recalled specifically because it retrospectively illuminates his later temptation toward the priesthood, so the ritual function of the object, not merely its appearance, is what the passage requires a translation to carry forward. Daryush's incense burner carrier under-specifies this function but does not assign the object a competing one, so the interpretant it generates, while thin, does not point the chain of semiosis toward a different ritual habit altogether.

Badiee's substitution of children holding espond activates a strong and specific habit of its own, since espond in Persian and broader Islamic folk practice is burned to ward off the evil eye, an apotropaic use governed by a habit of inference distinct from the habit governing Catholic liturgical incense. This is not to suggest that either object carries a single, unmixed association in lived religious practice; incense in Catholic worship can also carry connotations of purification and protection, and espond burning in some Persian contexts accompanies celebratory as well as protective occasions. The claim made here is narrower: within the specific scene Joyce constructs, a formal liturgical procession to a woodland altar,

the habit the source text activates is one of worship and sanctification, while the habit *espan* activates for a Persian reader is predominantly protective, and it is this difference in predominant association, rather than a claim that either object has only one possible meaning, that the analysis turns on. Where the source text's predominant habit leads a reader from incense to worship and sanctification, the substituted habit leads a Persian reader from *espan* to protection against malevolent influence. These are not two paths to the same final interpretant approached from different cultural starting points. They are two different final interpretants, because the communities of habit involved understand what the object is for in incompatible ways, at least in their most readily available, predominant senses. Eco's account of negotiation does not obviously license this substitution as a trade of something peripheral for something central, since nothing essential to the source text is gained by the protective association that *espan* introduces. The substitution is better described as the imposition of an alternative, internally coherent ritual logic onto a scene whose own logic the source text has already supplied.

Table 4. The Font

Source text (Joyce, 1973)	Daryush translation (Joyce, 1991)	Badiee translation (Joyce, 2006)
"as the font was above Stephen's reach, the old man would dip his hand and then sprinkle the water briskly" (Joyce, 1973, p. 219)	کاسه آب مقدس Joyce, 1991, p. 77. Literally, "bowl of holy water"	سنگاب Joyce, 2006, p. 85. The large stone basin used for ablutions before Islamic prayer, typically found at the entrance to a mosque

The same analysis applies to the baptismal font, with the same structure of habit-substitution. Daryush's *kase-ye ab-e moqaddas*, bowl of holy water, generates a weak but correctly directed interpretant, preserving the object's association with blessing without committing to any specific ritual habit that might conflict with the source. Badiee's *sangab* names a stone basin used for the ablutions, or *vozu*, performed before Islamic prayer, an object Dehkhoda's Dictionary describes as typically found at the entrance to a mosque ("*sangab*", n.d.) and this choice imports the full habit of inference associated with ritual purification before prayer, a habit governed by entirely different conditions and entirely different consequences than the Catholic habit of blessing through consecrated water at the threshold of a church. The extra-textual situation of the novel, set in a specifically Catholic household and school, supports the judgment that the chain of semiosis Badiee's choice sets in motion arrives, again, at a final interpretant the source text's own historical situation does not support.

The Priestly Vocation and the Sin Beyond Forgiveness

The theological density of the novel reaches its height in Chapter 4, where Stephen contemplates and ultimately refuses the priestly vocation his Jesuit teachers hope he will accept. This passage offers the clearest case in the corpus of a negotiation, in Eco's specific sense, that succeeds.

Table 5. The Unseen Paraclete

Source text (Joyce, 1973)	Daryush translation (Joyce, 1991)	Badiee translation (Joyce, 2006)
"the divine gloom and silence wherein dwelt the unseen paraclete... to sin against whom was a sin beyond forgiveness" (Joyce, 1973, p. 286)	فاراقلیت Joyce, 1991, p. 185, retaining the transliterated term without explanatory gloss	فاراقلیت Joyce, 2006, p. 193, with explanatory endnote

The paraclete, the Holy Spirit understood as advocate and comforter in Christian theology, is invoked here because the passage names the specific Catholic doctrine of an unforgivable sin, sin against the Holy Spirit, a category drawn from the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 12:31-32, New Revised Standard Version) and one with no precise counterpart in mainstream Islamic theology, which emphasizes the breadth rather than the limit of divine mercy. Both translators retain the transliterated term *faraqlit*, which is recognizable in the Islamic tradition through its appearance in discussions of whether Muhammad's coming was foretold in the Gospel of John, and this shared choice is itself revealing: *faraqlit* already carries a habit of inference within Persian religious discourse, but a habit drawn from interreligious polemic rather than from Catholic pneumatology, so retaining the term generates an interpretant that is foreign without being empty, available to be redirected by further information rather than locked onto a competing final interpretant the way *feyz-e moqaddas* was.

This is what makes Badiee's endnote function differently here than in the mortal sin example. Where the endnote on mortal sin arrived after a strong, wrongly directed interpretant had already been activated, the endnote here arrives to redirect an interpretant that was foreign and underdetermined to begin with, explaining that sin against the Holy Spirit is the one sin the Gospels describe as never forgiven and that Catholic teaching identifies this sin as a complete despair of divine forgiveness, while noting that Christian denominations themselves disagree about its precise content (Joyce, 2006, p. 355). In Eco's terms, the body text has not used the text by substituting an alien theology; it has negotiated, sacrificing immediate intelligibility while preserving the term's openness to correct redirection, and the endnote completes a single coherent interpretive act rather than competing with one already underway in the body. Badiee returned to this same passage in his own published afterword to the translation, defending his specific phrasing *gonah bar khalaf-e u*, sin against whom, against a critic who had proposed the alternative phrase *ma'siyat be dargah-e u*, transgression toward His presence. Badiee argued that the Persian word *dargah*, which denotes presence or threshold and is commonly used in religious and sacred texts, carries connotations of gratitude, modesty, and submission, and that pairing it with sin or transgression therefore produces a wrong collocation in Persian, supporting this claim with examples from classical Persian literature in which *dargah* pairs naturally with words like thanks and praise rather than with sin (Badiee, 2006, p. 411). This passage is therefore best read not as a simple exception that happens to turn out better than the mortal sin and sanctifying grace examples, but as a case in which the stance Badiee articulated in the 2003 roundtable ("Roman-i Bed'at-gozar," 2003, my translation), that he found no difference between the text's rituals and those of Islam, does not straightforwardly apply, since there is no obvious

Islamic theological category of an unforgivable sin for that stance to assimilate this passage to. Where the roundtable remark predicts an available point of equivalence, as it does for mortal sin and sanctifying grace, Badiee's practice tends toward Islamic assimilation; where no such point of equivalence is readily available, as here, his practice tends instead toward retention and explanation. This suggests the relevant generalization, within the cases examined here, is narrower than the roundtable remark alone implies: Badiee's assimilating tendency appears to operate specifically where a plausible Islamic counterpart exists to assimilate to, rather than as an unconditional preference for replacing Catholic vocabulary with Islamic vocabulary wherever it occurs.

Biblical Allusion and the Weight of Scripture

The novel's allusive texture draws heavily on the Christian Bible, and these allusions test a final dimension of Eco's framework, namely the role of extra-textual, communally sanctioned habit in licensing a particular interpretant as authoritative rather than merely permissible.

Table 6. The Order of Melchizedek

Source text (Joyce, 1973)	Daryush translation (Joyce, 1991)	Badiee translation (Joyce, 2006)
"he would be a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec" (Joyce, 1973, p. 294)	طبق طریقت ملجی سددک Joyce, 1991, p. 198, a transliteration of the name with no gloss	رتبه ملک یصدق Joyce, 2006, p. 206, using the standard Persian Bible translation of the name, with explanatory endnote citing Genesis 14:18-20 and Hebrews 5:6-7

Melchizedek, the priest king of Genesis 14 whose priesthood lacks recorded genealogy or end, is invoked in the Epistle to the Hebrews as a type prefiguring Christ's own eternal priesthood (Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 5:6, 6:20, 7:1-3, New Revised Standard Version, 1989), and the allusion here depends for its force on a reader's capacity to extend the interpretant beyond the bare name to the typological relationship the name invokes. Daryush's transliteration generates almost no interpretant at all in Eco's sense, since it connects to no existing habit in Persian and supplies no material from which a reader could construct one. The chain of semiosis simply does not advance past the name itself.

Badiee's use of the standard Persian Bible translation of the name, Malkisedeq, together with an endnote quoting the relevant passages from Genesis and Hebrews (Joyce, 2006, p. 359), succeeds for a reason the previous examples in this section help to clarify. By drawing on the canonized Persian translation of the Bible published by Bible Publishing Society in Iran in 1983, Badiee connects his rendering to an existing, communally sanctioned habit, one that belongs to the source text's own confessional tradition rather than to an unrelated one. This is the structural difference between this choice and the substitution of feyz-e moqaddas or sangab: there, a genuinely existing Persian habit was activated, but it was the wrong habit, belonging to a different confessional community than the one the intention of the work requires; here, the habit activated is the right one, because it is the habit a Persian reader of the

Christian Bible would already use to make sense of the same name. The interpretant Badiee's choice generates therefore extends the chain of semiosis in the direction the source text's own extra-textual situation supports, rather than redirecting it toward a different final interpretant altogether.

Table 7. The Beatitudes

Source text (Joyce, 1973)	Daryush translation (Joyce, 1991)	Badiee translation (Joyce, 2006)
"How comes the first beatitude promises the kingdom of heaven to the poor of heart, the second beatitude promises also to the meek that they shall possess the land" (Joyce, 1973, p. 253)	وعدۀ سعادت نخستین/ وعدۀ سعادت دوم Joyce, 1991, p. 133, a paraphrase not drawn from any standard Persian Bible translation	بشارت نخست/ بشارت دوم Joyce, 2006, p. 141, using the standard Persian Bible translation, with explanatory endnote citing Matthew 5:3-4

The Beatitudes, drawn from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-4, New Revised Standard Version), make the same point as the Melchizedek example, but they also expose where Eco's criteria pull in different directions, a tension the discussion below returns to. The intra-textual criterion alone would not obviously favor one rendering over the other, since both Daryush's promise of happiness and Badiee's besharat convey the propositional content of the verses adequately. What distinguishes them is the extra-textual criterion specifically, the question of whether the rendering connects to the habit a reader would need in order to recognize the passage as scripture rather than paraphrase, a recognition the novel's Jesuit educational setting requires, since the Beatitudes function there as known and authoritative text. Daryush's phrasing, not drawn from any existing Persian Bible translation, generates an interpretant that conveys content while failing to activate this recognition. Badiee's use of the standard Persian rendering, together with his citation of the Matthean source in the accompanying endnote (Badiee, 2006), activates exactly this habit, and does so by the same mechanism that succeeded in the Melchizedek example, namely connection to an existing, source-tradition-appropriate community of interpretation rather than to an unrelated one.

Discussion: What Confessional Translation Tests in Eco's Framework

Four observations follow from the analysis of these seven cases, each extending Eco's hermeneutic framework in a direction his own writing on translation does not fully pursue, and each offered as a pattern observed in the cases examined here rather than as a generalization established for the two translations as wholes.

First, the analysis of these cases confirms that unlimited semiosis, as Eco understands it, is compatible with evaluative judgment rather than opposed to it. Both translations are legitimate interpretants in the sense that the source text genuinely generates them, yet they are not equally defensible. Badiee's gonah-e kabire and Daryush's gonah-e mohlek are both responses the text permits in some sense, but one disrupts the intra-textual coherence of the novel's account of sin and grace while the other merely fails to make that coherence accessible. The difference between a permissible interpretant and a privileged one, which Eco's account of the final interpretant gestures toward without fully specifying, becomes concrete once intra-textual and extra-textual criteria are applied to this particular case.

Second, the analysis identifies a specific hazard that Eco's framework helps to name but does not explicitly theorize, which this article terms *confessional false equivalence*. Confessional false equivalence refers to the substitution of a target-culture religious expression that appears semantically or functionally equivalent to a source-confessional expression but activates a different doctrinal or ritual framework, thereby redirecting interpretation away from the source text's confessional logic. It arises precisely where two religious traditions share enough vocabulary, and enough established habit, to seem interchangeable. The term is offered as an analytical category for describing such cases within Eco's framework. Section 4 shows the pattern in different degrees in *gonah-e kabire*, *espan*, and *sangab*. The clearest instance among the cases examined is the substitution of *feyz-e moqaddas* for sanctifying grace, which is more hermeneutically dangerous than an obviously alien substitution would be, because its plausibility rests on a genuine but partial overlap between Sufi and Catholic conceptions of grace, an overlap that conceals rather than announces the underlying doctrinal divergence. Eco's insistence that signs carry meaning through the specific codes and habits of a particular interpretive community supplies exactly the analytic tool needed to show why apparent closeness can be more misleading than evident distance in this instance, and why the strength of an interpretant, its fluency and ease of further inference, is no guarantee of its direction.

Third, in the cases examined here, Badiee's translation exhibits a structure this article describes as a divided negotiation, a term introduced here to name a specific pattern rather than to claim an entirely new phenomenon. Existing scholarship has long recognized that a translator's paratext, including prefaces and notes, can supplement or complicate the body text (Genette, 1997), and the retranslation hypothesis has examined how later translations of a single source often shift their orientation toward the foreign text, with retranslators bearing an ethical responsibility, on this view, to resist letting the target language and culture efface the foreignness of the original (Venuti, 2004). What the present analysis adds to this existing literature is a way of evaluating, rather than merely describing, the relationship between a translation's body text and its apparatus, using Eco's distinction between interpreting and using a text to ask whether the body text and the paratext are pulling toward the same final interpretant or toward different ones. In the cases examined here, the body text repeatedly substitutes Islamic vocabulary for Catholic concepts, a move that Eco's framework identifies as overinterpretation, while the endnotes repeatedly restore the Catholic content the body text has set aside, a move that constitutes genuine interpretation in Eco's sense. The Paraclete example shows that this pattern is not inevitable even within Badiee's own translation, since there the body text and endnote work together as a single negotiation rather than as competing acts. Evaluating Badiee's translation by its body text alone would understate its hermeneutic care in cases like the Paraclete and the Melchizedek allusion. Evaluating it by its paratext alone would overstate the experience of an ordinary reader who does not consult fifty pages of endnotes and who, in cases like mortal sin and sanctifying grace, has already had the chain of semiosis redirected before any correction arrives. Any adequate account of this translation's relationship to the source text's

intentio operis, at least in the cases examined here, needs to consider both registers together, and to ask what kind of reader the translation is, in practice, addressed to.

Fourth, the analysis exposes a genuine limitation in Eco's own framework. His intra-textual and extra-textual criteria are most useful for ruling out indefensible interpretations. They offer less guidance when two defensible interpretations compete, as arguably occurs in the treatment of the Beatitudes, where the extra-textual criterion favors Badiee's use of a canonized Bible translation but does not by itself determine how much weight that criterion should carry relative to other considerations in a given passage. Crisafulli (2004, p. 96) makes a similar observation about Eco's framework more generally, noting that it is more effective at excluding bad readings than at adjudicating between several good ones. This is not a fatal weakness, since Eco himself never claims to supply an algorithm, only a principled vocabulary within which disagreement can proceed, but it is worth stating plainly rather than treating the framework as more determinate than it is.

Conclusion

This article asked whether Daryush's and Badiee's renderings of Joyce's Catholic vocabulary remain answerable to the *intentio operis* of the source text. The seven cases examined suggest that they do so unevenly, and that the unevenness does not track how foreign or familiar a rendering sounds. In several cases the rendering closest to an established Persian religious habit carries the reader furthest from the source's doctrinal logic, while the more opaque rendering keeps that logic's direction at the cost of accessibility. Judging translations of confessional material by fluency, or by fidelity to surface form, would therefore miss what is at stake, which is which structure of belief a rendering invites the reader to inhabit.

The article's contribution lies in the tools this observation required. Reading Eco's distinction between interpreting and using a text through Peircean habit yields an evaluative approach that neither treats every rendering as equally defensible nor reduces the source to a single fixed meaning. Confessional false equivalence and the divided negotiation between body text and apparatus are offered as categories for that kind of evaluation. They also bear on how such material is studied. Doctrinal terms take their meaning from their place within a structure of belief, so a rendering affects the relations among terms and not only the term itself. An item-by-item analysis, such as the earlier study of these translations (Malekshahi, 2009), can establish which strategies were used, but not what happens to the interdependence of sin, grace, confession, and absolution. That requires analysis at the level of the conceptual system.

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