

# Translational Narratology: An Eclectic Conceptual Model for Studying Translated Narrative Texts

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## Abstract

This paper introduces ‘translational narratology’ (TN) as an eclectic conceptual model for studying translated narrative texts. As a source-based theory, TN investigates the status of three planes of the original narratology in translation: ‘story’, ‘text’, and ‘narration’. In fact, as an eclectic model, TN aims to set a theoretical foundation for both the original narrative texts and their corresponding texts in translation. However, the process for the original writer and the translator is a little bit different: the writer usually begins with the elements of the ‘story’ plane, and then comes to the elements of ‘narration’ and ‘text’ planes, simultaneously; the translator, as a reader, begins with the ‘text/narration’, and then comes to the ‘story’ plane. The former is bottom-up; the latter is top-down. The translator may have nothing to do with the ‘story’ plane; however, he/she may deal with this plane in the process of reading, understanding, and, preferably, translating. Some theorists postulate that the original narrative models have made no room for the presence of the translator as the main agent of the translated narrative fiction. This paper sets the theoretical scene for the translator’s discursive presence in the translated narrative texts.

## Keywords

Narratology; Story; Text; Narration; Translational Narratology.

## 1. Introduction

All through the history of translation, literary texts in general, and literary narrative texts in particular, have been translated, and less attempt has been made to focus much attention on how these texts have been translated into other languages. However, since the advent of translation studies in the 1960s, there has been an increasing interest in taking translating literary narrative texts into consideration. Since Leech and Short’s seminal publication, *The style in fiction* (1980), and the development of structural narratology, there appeared some attempts to deal with the translated narrative texts, especially regarding the way the main narrative constituents, narrative point of view, and free indirect discourse, among others, have been translated into another language. The main issue is what happens when the elements of a narrative text are rendered

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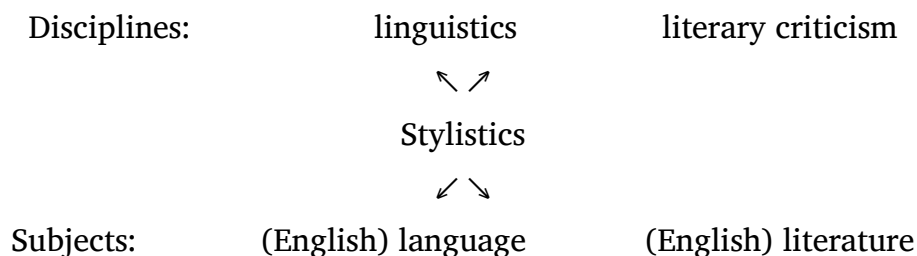
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into another language. The act of translation brings with it a new text in a new context for a new readership, meaning that the same original narrative text might be read and interpreted variously in the new target context by the new target readership; hence, every translated narrative text might be read as a re-creation of the source text. In sum, the main problem is what happens to the source narratology while translated into the target text. This paper tries to deal with the theory of narratology in translation through what has been termed, for the lack of a better term, “translational narratology”.

### Toward Defining Translational Narratology

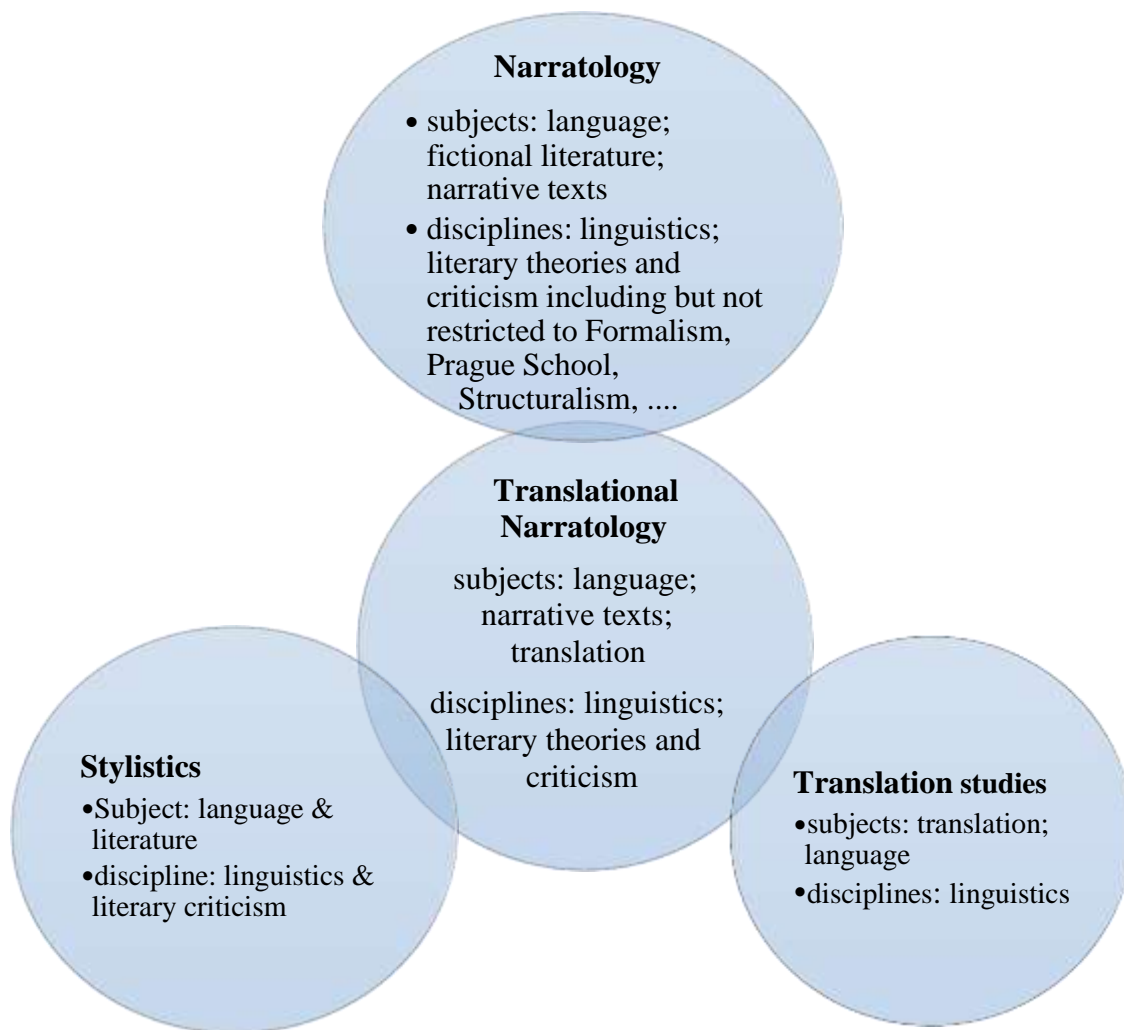
Looking holistically, ‘translational narratology’ (henceforth TN) is not, in Woolf’s (1929) word, “a room of its own”, but rather a multi-chamber, and each chamber with many rooms, i.e., a combination of some interrelated and interconnected fields of study in the form of interdisciplinary. In this sense, TN consists of at least three fields of study: structural narratology, translation studies, and stylistics. On the one hand, as a science, narratology (at least, structural narratology) deals mostly with the language and the grammar of narrative and investigates the main components of narrative fiction: story and discourse in the form of ‘story-narratology’ and ‘discourse-narratology’: the former happens at the macro-level, the latter, at the micro-level. On the other hand, as an attempt to put literary criticism from a scientific perspective, stylistics comes to appear as a new approach to investigating literature through the lenses of linguistics. In addition, as a sub-branch of applied linguistics, TS is concerned with the theory and practice of translation from one language and culture to another language and culture.

Each field, employing Widdowson's (1975) terminology, has its subjects and disciplines. These three fields of study have at least one subject (language) and two disciplines (linguistics, and literary theory and criticism) in common. As for stylistics, Widdowson (p.4) has suggested the following diagram:



*Figure 1* Stylistics According to Widdowson (1975, p.4)

This diagram consists of ‘language’ and ‘literature’, as two subject matters, as well as ‘linguistics’ and ‘literary criticism’ as two disciplines. As the diagram indicates, not only is there a relationship between the two disciplines and the two subjects, but also there is a relationship between subjects and disciplines and vice versa. Stylistics “can serve as a means whereby literature and language as subjects can...move towards both linguistics and literary criticism...” (ibid). Also, narratology and translation studies have got their subject matters and disciplines. The diagram is self-evident:



*Figure 2* Translational Narratology

Needless to say, these subjects and disciplines can be interconnected and interrelated to each other, and, depending on the ranges of aims, limits, scopes, and the various approaches one may take, one field of study may become foregrounded and/or back-grounded. Furthermore, concerning Holmes's map (as cited in Munday, 2012, p. 16) as the first and foremost map entitled "The name and the nature of translation studies", TN can be regarded as a pure, partially theoretical, product/process-oriented, descriptive field of study which has been restricted, for its subject matter, mainly to the translated narrative texts. It is both a product/process-oriented field of study in that it studies not only the process of what happens in the mind of the translator; hence, the translator's voice and style, but also it examines how the original narratology is translated into the target language and culture. In this paper, TN, quoting Widdowson's terms, can serve as a means whereby translated narrative text and language as subjects can move towards both linguistics and literary theories criticism as disciplines. In this sense, TN examines how the ST narratology is represented in the TT through the linguistic methodology. TN, it is argued, shows how such narrative devices of the ST as POV and FID can be translated into the TT.

## **Review of the Related Literature**

Having reviewed most of the theories and works on this topic, Herman (1996) and Schiavi (1996) among others, it can be said that these theories, although they may act as stepping stones, have their terms in taking the translator's style as well as translating style into account, especially about prose fiction in general, and the translated narrative texts, in particular. Now, bearing these theories in mind, we are going to focus, in this paper, on the relationship between narrative studies and stylistics, i.e., stylo-narratological approach, on the one hand, and stylo-narratological approach with translation studies, on the other. The outcome of these two relationships would yield an interdisciplinary field of study that, for the lack of better terminology, we should like to designate as 'Translational Narratology' (TN). In fact, 'TN' can be regarded as a pure, partially theoretical, descriptive field of study restricted, in its text type, mainly to the literary narrative texts. In other words, it would be both product/process-oriented DTS in that it studies not only the process of what happens in the mind of the translator; hence, the translator's voice and style, it also examines how the original narratology is translated into the target language and culture.

As for the practical aspects of TN, some works are noteworthy. Bosseaux (2001) has considered the translated style in both her unpublished MA and Ph.D. dissertations (2001; 2004) respectively. However, she published her Ph.D. later, entitled *How Does it Feel: POV in Translation* (2007), a computer-assisted study of narrative voice, POV, and FID in three French translations of Woolf's *The Waves*. Klitgard (2004) reviewed two Dutch translations of Joyce's *Ulysses* for how the translators have translated the dual voice and dual style of FID as a narrative device. In her M.A. thesis, Delzenderooy (2008) tried to study the style of the three Persian translators of Woolf's *The Waves*. Horri (2007, 2010) has tried to elaborate a little bit on the different aspects of the relationship between narratology and translation; all of them are in Persian save for their abstracts being in English. Horri (2007) has worked on the theoretical background of the narrative communicative model in translation. Having this model in mind, the present study has tried to elaborate on this model as fully and as systematically, as opposed to Horri (2007), as possible.

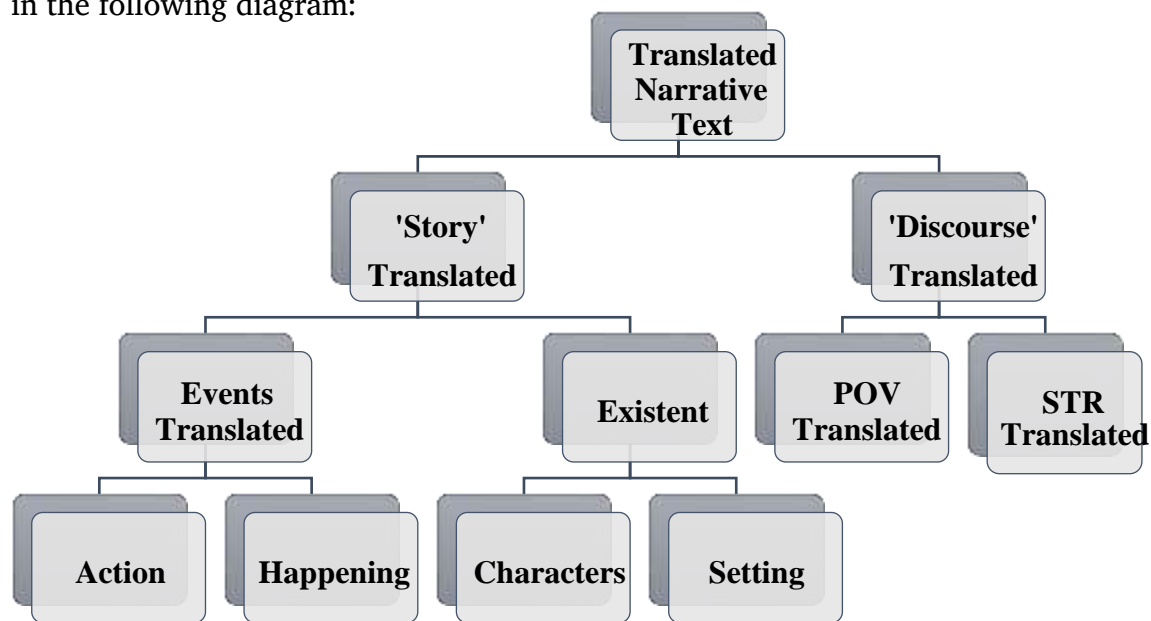
## **Narrative Planes**

All narratologists believe that the best starting point for doing narratology is to divide it into two planes: 'story-narratology' and 'discourse-narratology'. In short, anything that tells a story in a succession of chronological events done by characters in a setting can be narrative. Now, as far as the elements of the 'story' plane are concerned, there should be no meaningful difference between the original text and translation. However, since the elements of 'the discourse' plane at the micro-level are in direct relationship with the elements of the 'story' plane, how the translator may render the elements of 'the discourse' plane at the micro-level may affect the elements of the 'story' plane at the macro-level. Now, what was said so far gives a picture of the 'story' plane that is but only one plane of narrative definition. This plane usually lies at the deep level of narrative, and it is supposed to be realized at the surface level we may call the 'text' of a narrative. As the second important plane of narrative,

‘text’ includes the way, and the act of ‘telling’, ‘recounting’, and/ or ‘representing’ ‘story’ plane. In fact, ‘text’ can be defined as a verbal manifestation of the ‘story’ plane at surface level that can be visible, and at the reader’s disposal. The writer exploits language in a very artistic way, and what may come to help him to bend and twist up language artistically is the ‘style’ and ‘stylistics’.

**Story/Discourse Narratology Translated**

As for the translated narrative text, we will have the same three planes: ‘story’, ‘text’, and ‘narration’. However, the process for the original writer and the translator is a little bit different: the writer usually begins with the elements of the ‘story’ plane, and then comes to the elements of the ‘story’ and ‘text’ planes, simultaneously; the translator, as a reader, begins with the ‘text/narration’, and then comes to the ‘story’ plane. The former is bottom-up; the latter is top-down. Of course, the translator may have nothing to do with the ‘story’ plane, because their job comes to an end the moment he finishes his translation as a product; however, as the first reader of the original, he needs to have a general understanding of the ‘story’ plane, he may deal with this plane in the process of reading, understanding, and, preferably, translating. Now, we will put these two planes of the translated narrative texts in the following diagram:



*Figure 3* Translated Narrative Text

Since we are doing narratology from the translator’s viewpoint, we should necessarily deal with the second plane, i.e. ‘discourse’-narratology’ to come to the first plane: ‘story-narratology’.

**‘Narration’ Plane: Narrative Communicative Model**

The third plane, and/or the ‘story’ plane, much known as the ‘narrative communicative model’, has been shaped around different theories in which the main concern is laid on the communicative aspects of the language of narrative fiction and has been designed in many versions by different theorists, yet most of these versions are concerned with the

central concepts such as ‘author’, ‘narrator’, ‘narratee’, and ‘reader’. As for its background, this model has been drawn on some previous models, of which Chatman’s (1978) model is much more quoted in the theoretical books.

### **Translated Narrative Communicative Model**

Both Hermans (1996) and Schiavi (1996), among others, believe that the original narrative models have made no room for the presence of the translator as the main agent of the translated narrative fiction. If we take again the narrative text as a communicative model, we can see that the communication goes from the author (the real or implied) to the reader (the real or implied) through the agent of the narrator/narratee. Such is the case in the narrative communicative model of the original text. However, it is a matter of debate whether such a model works in the translated narrative texts too? It is obvious that the narrative model finds, in translation, a new effective component or agent that has, by intention or not, been completely overlooked by the original model: ‘the translator’. It seems there is a tendency in current approaches to narrative to ignore the translator’s voice and presence because as Hermans puts it, “the dominant ideology of translation in Western culture allows no space for translation. Accepting another or “plural” voice means “destabilizing and decentering the speaking subject and creates the prospect of a runaway inflation of voices and meanings” (Hermans 44). But, it should be borne in mind that there is at least a voice “out there” in the translation that, as an active agent, has yielded a new text, and has left an imprint of his/her personality in the target language, but due to the “illusion of transparency” (Hermans 24), or the translator’s invisibility (Venuti 1995), or the translator as a reconstructor of an implied author (Schiavi 17), he has not been heard and consequently is left unnoticed. The translator is “out there”, as long as we have his product in front of our eyes: translation; otherwise, there would be no communication from the original author to the target reader. Therefore, there should be a place for the translator’s presence in the translated narrative models. Among scholars, Hermans (1996), Schiavi (1996), and O’Sullivan (2003) are the ones who have modified, in one way or another, the original narrative model to allow room for the translator as the main agent of the translated text. In what follows, keeping these models in mind, we discuss them regarding Woolf’s novel and their three Persian translations.

### **Narrative Communicative Model in *TTL***

Taking as an example, we can divide Woolf’s novel into three planes: ‘story’, ‘discourse’, and ‘narration’. What can be in the direct relationship with the notion of voice is the ‘narration’ plane in that what is fundamentally communicated from the author to the reader is through different voices that may be heard from the main agent of the act of narration, i.e., the ‘narrator’. When we read a novel, here, *TTL*, there is always a teller in the text of the novel that is the main voice that communicates the story of Mrs. Ramsay to the reader. In what follows, we mainly discuss the main participants of the narrative communicative model, including the real author/reader; the implied author/reader; the narrator/narratee, and their counterpart in translation: ‘translator’; these participants can be regarded as the main sources of the voice of the text in both the original and translation.

### **Real Author and Real Reader**

As the main source of the work product, the real or historical author is an agent, male or female, who is generally responsible for the narrative text as the final product of his/her creativity. Here in our case, Woolf, as a historical figure, who has lived in a period of history, has written *TTL*. Correspondingly, we, as the real reader, read her novel and have interpretations that may be completely different from other readers. As for the translation, each of the three translators of Woolf's novel, as one real reader, has read and decided to translate it into Persian. Therefore, in one extreme of the narrative model, there stands Woolf, as the real female author, and on another extreme, the readers and the three Persian translators/readers (Hosseini 1994), as a male reader, (Keyhân 2008, and Bejâniân 1991), as two female readers). As far as the notion of the real author/reader/translator is concerned, the challenging point is the concept of originality and authenticity of the original text as opposed to the target text. All through the history of literary criticism, there has been a huge emphasis placed on the original work, as superior, creative productivity, as opposed to the translation as an inferior, derivative, less creative activity (Baker 2000). Traditionally, writers and theorists, in general, are dubious about whether a translation can be as good as the original. It is why Woolf, interestingly yet paradoxically, takes translation as a "mutilating" process.

### **Implied Author and Implied Reader**

When we enter the narrative communicative model, formulated by O'Sullivan's model, we can come across two participants: the implied author and its counterpart, the implied reader. Since as early as 1961, when the concept of the 'implied author' was introduced by Booth (1961) in his *Rhetoric of Fiction*, there has been an increasing fuss over this concept. The list abounds, but it is not in the scope of this study to discuss the concept in detail, and sufficient it will be to give a general picture of this notion to set the scene to discuss its counterpart in the translation.

As for the implied reader, when the real reader is creating his work, he usually tries to figure out what kind of reader will read his work (whether this person reads his work or not). The mental picture of a real reader in the mind of the real author would be called an 'implied reader'. The implied reader will be addressed by the real author. In other words, an implied reader will be an ideal or created reader who is supposed to respond to the author's norms through the text. In theory, the implied author communicates with the implied reader; in practice, the real author communicates with the real reader. Furthermore, because the real author may create different works in the process of creation, so he may leave different versions of himself in his different works. In this sense, the version Woolf may leave of her second-person *TTL* may be different from her second self in *The Waves*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, or even her short stories. Now, because we may have different readers, so we may have different versions of the same author, and naturally, different kinds of interpretations of the same work.

The case becomes much more complex when one comes across the implied translator and the implied reader of the translation. Naturally, when a writer is creating his/her work, he thinks less about the target readers than the original ones. She is writing for her readers who share with her the same language. Now, the real translator, as less an implied reader than the real reader, takes the role of the original author and tries to re-create the original work in a new language system, completely different from the real author's language system. The translator, as one of the real readers of the work, becomes the second writer of the work for a new readership in a new context. Just as the original author employs his narrator(s) to communicate with narratee (s), the translator tries to re-create the original narrator/narratee in a way to be adapted to the norms and conventions of his target language and culture. And if the narrator is the main agent for the voice of the work, so is the translator's re-created narrator for the voice in translation. If this re-created narrator communicates the translated story to the new readership, he/she can be an agent to make a distinction between the original and translation.

### **Narrator and Narratee**

So far, we have explained that the narrator can be regarded as the main voice of both the original and translation. In the original narratology, the narrator can be divided into different kinds and categories. Taking the story-world as 'diegesis', i.e., the main narrative situation, Genette (228-230) has identified four types of narrative situations corresponding to four types of narrators: a narrator standing above the 'diegetic' level, is 'extradiegetic'; a narrator within the main story, is called 'intradiegetic'; now, both extra/intradiegetic narrators can be present in, or absent from, the story they narrate; if present, they are called 'homodiegetic'; and if absent, they are called 'heterodiegetic' narrators. Thus, we would have four pairs: 'extra/heterodiegetic', 'extra/homodiegetic'; 'intra/heterodiegetic', and 'intra/homodiegetic'. For instance, in Woolf's novel, the narrator who narrates the story of Mrs. Ramsay and her family, standing above, and out of the main situation of the novel, and being absent from the events, is both 'extra-diegetic' and 'heterodiegetic'. However, this 'extra/heterodiegetic' narrator focalizes the story within the eyes of the characters; so the characters, including Mrs. Ramsay, Lyly Brisco, and others, can be 'intradiegetic' narrators, and because they are present in the story the narrator conducts through their eyes, they can also be 'homodiegetic' narrators. Generally, two important questions are raised here: do the original 'covert' and 'overt' narrators remain unchanged, or due to the norms and conventions of the target language and culture, 'covert' becomes 'overt', and the other way around? More importantly, would there be any changes in POV and 'focalization'? A new separate room should be made to put into practice such important questions. However, it is tried to mention an example to show how the main elements of a narrative text, Woolf's TTL, have been translated into Persian.

### **Translational Narratology in Practice through Woolf's TTL**

This excerpt, taken from the third section, has been focalized through Lyly Brisco's point of view, as the internal focalizer-character of the story after Mrs. Ramsay dies at the end of the first section.



What was it then? What did it mean? Could things thrust their hands up and grip one; could the blade cut; the fist grasp? Was there no safety? No learning by heart of the ways of the world? No guide, no shelter, but all was a miracle, and leaping from the pinnacle of a tower into the air? Could it be, even for elderly people, that this was life?—startling, unexpected, unknown? For one moment she felt that if they both got up, here, now on the lawn, and demanded an explanation, why was it so short, why was it so inexplicable, said it with violence, as two fully equipped human beings from whom nothing should be hid might speak, then, beauty would roll itself up; the space would fill; those empty flourishes would form into shape; if they shouted loud enough Mrs. Ramsay would return.

پس چه بود؟ معنایش چه بود؟ آیا امکان داشت که چیزهایی دستشان را بالا بیاورند و به دست آدم چنگ بزنند؛ آیا امکان داشت که تیغه شمشیر ببرد و گره مشت باز شود و چنگ بزنند؛ پس آیا سلامت در کار نبود؟ آدم از رسم دنیا بی‌خبر ماند؟ دلیل راهی، پناهگاهی نبود، بلکه همه چیز معجزه بود و خیز برداشتن از بالای برج و درون هوا رفتن؟ آیا امکان داشت که چنین چیزی، حتی برای پیرها هم، زندگی باشد؟ حیرت‌آور، غی منتظره، ناشناخته؟ لحظه‌ای احساس کرد که اگر هر دو همینجا روی چمن به پا خیزند و توضیح بخواهند که چرا زندگی اینقدر کوتاه است و تنبیین نمی‌پذیرد، و این خواست را با خشونت به زبان بیاورند، آنچنان که از دو آدم کاملاً مسلحی که هیچ چیز از آنها پنهان نیست ساخته است، آنوقت زیبایی عیان می‌شد؛ فضا پر می‌شد؛ آن تذهیب‌کاری‌های تھی شکل می‌گرفت؛ اگر صدا در صدا می‌انداختند، خانم رمزی باز می‌گشت (حسینی، ص ۲۰۳).

پس مسئله چه بود؟ معنی‌اش چه بود؟ می‌شد چیزی دست بالا ببرد و آدم را بگیرد. تیغه می‌برید؟ دست مشت می‌شد؟ دیگر هیچ چیز ایمن نبود؟ نمی‌شد روش‌های دنیا را از بر کرد؟ نه پناهگاهی بود نه راهنمایی، بلکه همه چیز معجزه‌وار بود، مثل پرش از قله‌ی یک برج به فضا؟ می‌شد حتی در مورد آدم‌های سالخورده گفت زندگی چنین است؟ بهت‌آور، غیرمنتظره، ناشناخته؟ یک لحظه به نظرش آمد که اگر هر دو همین حالا روی چمن‌ها برخیزند و توضیحی بخواهند این که چرا زندگی چنین کوتاه است، چرا توضیح ناپذیر است- و مثل دو انسان کامل که نباید چیزی از آن‌ها پنهان بماند خواسته‌ی خود را با شدت بر زبان آورند، زیبایی جاری می‌شود، فضا پر می‌گردد، منحنی‌ها حول خلأ شکل می‌گیرند اگر آن‌ها به قدر کافی بلند فریاد بزنند خانم رمزی باز می‌گردد (کیهان، ص ۲۲۸).

پس این چیست؟ چه مفهومی دارد؟ آیا اشیاء می‌توانستند دستهای خود را بگشایند و شما را تسخیر کنند؟ آیا تیغ چاقو می‌توانست قدرت برندگی داشته باشد. مشت به هدف می‌خورد؟ آیا هیچ امنیتی وجود نداشت؟ آیا هیچ راهی، که بتوان طریقت این جهان را حفظ کرد وجود نداشت؟ آیا رهبر و پناهگاهی نبود؟ همه چیز معجزه‌ای بود جهشی از قله یک برج معلق در فضا؟ حتی برای اشخاص سالخورده ممکن بود که این زندگی باشد؟ غافلگیرانه و ناگهانی و ناآشنا؟ در یک آن این احساس را داشت که چنانچه آنها، او، آقای کارمایکل، از جای بلند شوند و توضیحاتی درباره این ایجاز و این ویژگی غیر قابل شرح در اختیار یکدیگر بگذارند و چنانچه با شدت و تندی خواسته‌ی خود را ابراز کنند همچنان که دو انسان کاملاً مقتدر انجام می‌دهند و هیچ چیز نباید از چشمشان پوشیده بماند، تنها در این صورت بود که زیبایی در خود می‌پیچید، فضای خالی پر می‌شد، قوس‌های اسلیمی، شکل می‌پذیرفت، آری، چنانچه با صدای بلند فریاد برمی‌آوردند، خانم رامسی باز می‌گشت (بجانیان، ص ۳۱۰).

Here again, the external narrator, as an extra/hetero-diegetic narrator, is narrating the scene but through Brodsky's feelings, emotions, perceptions, and the like. This passage can be regarded as a good sample of 'FID', in which the narrator's voice has been merged with that of the character. In the middle of the passage, two temporal and spatial deictics, 'now', and 'here', come by which the narrator's past narration finds itself merged with the character's present time. This merging takes the reader to the very presence of the action taking place in front of his eyes. As I will show later, this 'conjoint occurrence' brings with it a kind of sympathy both in the

character toward other characters in the story, as well as in the reader toward the characters themselves. It is why when we finish reading such a passage, we feel a kind of sympathy and empathy not only toward Lyly Brisco as the focalizer of the scene but, more importantly, toward Mrs. Ramsay, who, though physically absent, has always been present all through the novel by the spiritual energy she has injected to the scenes. It seems as if she were alive all through these scenes, and the obvious reason is that it is she who has set a trip to the lighthouse, and although Mr. Ramsay is too restive not to come to such a trip, in the end, he is he the who puts step into the boat to go to the lighthouse. I want to say that what is of high importance in analyzing Spatio-temporal deixis in both original and translation is not the referential meaning of them at the level of the sentence, but pay much attention to the functions they bring home with them. In this sense, it seems that the translators have tried to re-create such feelings as sympathy and empathy in the target readers, though with varying degrees. However, concerning the linguistic and stylistic features of the Persian language, it seems that Hosseini has done his best to both keep the stylistic features of the original text, and its author, on the one hand, and to present an acceptable translation for the target readers for translating Spatio-temporal deixis as one of the signposts of constructing point of view, on the other hand.

### **Conclusion**

This paper took into account the narrative communicative model and its participants in both the original and translation at the ‘narration’ plane. As a source-based theory, TN investigates the status of the three planes of the original narratology in translation: ‘story’, ‘text’, and ‘narration’. In fact, as an eclectic model, TN aims to set a theoretical foundation for both the original narrative texts and their corresponding texts in translation. However, the process for the original writer and the translator is a little bit different: the writer usually begins with the elements of the ‘story’ plane, and then comes to the elements of ‘narration’ and ‘text’ planes, simultaneously; the translator, as a reader, begins with the ‘text/narration’, and then comes to the ‘story’ plane. As a general result, we can say that the original narrative models have made no room for the presence of the translator as the main agent of the translated narrative fiction. In this paper, Translational Narratology, as a new eclectic working model, can serve as a means whereby translated narrative text and language as subjects can move towards both linguistics and literary theories criticism as disciplines. In this sense, TN examines how the ST narratology is represented in the TT through the linguistic methodology. TN shows how such narrative devices of the ST as POV and FID can be translated into the TT. Now, when we leave behind the ‘narration’ level and enter the ‘text’ level at ‘discourse-narratology’, we become confronted with the two most salient narrative devices that play an important role in constructing the story world of narrative fiction on the one hand, and the overall meaning of the story at ‘story-narratology’, on the other hand. These devices are called POV and FID. Moreover, these two narrative devices are those two significant elements with which the translator is confronted while dealing with reconstructing the original story world and the overall meaning of the ST in TT. It is hoped to deal with these topics in a new separate paper(s).

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