



Historiography of Translation of Novels of Resistance Literature from English to Persian

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Abstract

Resistance literature deals with concepts such as subjugation and deliverance. Translation of this type of literature has played an important role in transferring such concepts to other countries. The purpose of this study is to present a quantitative-analytical study of the novels of resistance literature translated from English to Persian during the four administrations which were in power in Iran between 1978 and 2005. To this end, historiography approach proposed by Pym (2014) was applied. Primarily, the themes of the novels were classified based on Harlow (1987) and DeShazer's (1994) model of classification of resistance literature. The themes include race discrimination, class conflict, war, colonialism, post-colonialism, and totalitarianism. Then, the translated novels of each administration were examined to see which ones covered the above themes. The results indicated that only 6% of the published translations of the period under study was allocated to resistance novels. It can be concluded that translation of resistance novels was marginalized, and Iranians were basically reading novels covering themes other than resistance literature.

Keywords: Resistance Literature, class Conflict, Colonialism and postcolonialism, Totalitarianism, Racism, War

1. Introduction

Much literature dealing with resistance of nations has been published in different countries, such as India, Ireland, Latin America, France, Spain, Australia, Egypt, Algeria, Palestine, Lebanon, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and so on. Similarly, over the last four decades, resistance literature has been produced in the historical context of Iran too. Resistance works are woven into the historical context of Iran as a significant part of literature which created an awareness of the possibility of change. In the contemporary literature of Iran, resistance literature is divided into texts about the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the Sacred Defense period. In addition, translations of those books are also conspicuous. Harlow (1987, p. 3) defined resistance literature as a political activity to liberate people from colonial occupation. DeShazer (1994, p. 2) believed “resistance poetry offers and supports various counterhegemonic models of social justice and racial, gender, class empowerment, and it engages in acts of political and aesthetic intervention in the service of one or more of these models”. Sangari (1383, p. 9) explains:

Resistance Literature is formed under conditions such as repression, domestic despotism, absence of individual and social freedom, lawlessness, and anarchy against bases of power, violence, and national and individual’s interests (as cited in Mousavi Razavi and Allahdaneh, 2018).

As a result, the contents of these works are domestic cruelty or external invasion in all the political, cultural, economic, social areas, and resistance against anti-freedom movements. Therefore, in its widest sense, resistance literature is one which challenges any type of hegemony. Based on the above definitions, all novels with themes of racism, class conflict, war, colonialism, post-colonialism, totalitarianism and gender were identified as resistance literature.

The purpose of this study is to present a quantitative-analytical review of novels of resistance literature translated from English to Persian during the four administrations which were in power in Iran between 1978 and 2005, namely President Bani Sadr’s, President Ayatullah Khamenei’s, President Rafsanjani’s, and President Khatami’s administration, that is, to specify their amounts in each of the four administrations, and to categorize them in order to open avenues to the socio-historical conditions of the country during the specified period. In order to elaborately compare the period of the early years of the Islamic Revolution and the period of the Iran-Iraq War during which Iranians were resisting enemies with other historical episodes during which there was not any wars and tensions in the country, the periodization of the present study was selected from the year of the victory of the Islamic Revolution (1978) to the end of the presidency of President Khatami in 2005 so as to facilitate the study and analysis of the historical episodes



and the causality that might have linked the events of the historical episodes based on Pym (2014).

1.1 Research Questions

1. What is the archaeology of Persian translations of English novels of resistance based on the terminology of Pym (2014) during the four administrations which were in power in Iran between 1978 and 2005?
2. What kind of possible relation exist in the practice of translation of resistance novels and the socio-historical conditions during each of the four administrations which were in power in Iran between 1978 and 2005?

2. Review of the related literature

Some kind of literature that voices against hegemonic domination and portrays pains of subjugated subaltern is known as resistance literature (Bande, 2006). Fazilat (2008, pp. 403–411)¹ maintained that resistance behaviors would be successful when they change to poetry and literature, and their impacts would go far beyond ordinary and everyday struggles. He added that resistance literature might make the community aware of the complexity of human relationships and evoke them to act against oppressive behaviors (p. 409). Some researchers have categorized resistance literature into different classifications; Chehreghani (2017, p. 14), for example, considered different kinds, including political literature, protest literature, civic literature, banned or clandestine literature, prison literature, war literature, exile literature, memoirs, and immigration literature as resistance literature. According to Torabi (2010), resistance literature can be divided into three general categories, including religious-ritual, national-native, and humane-world resistance literature (p. 23). Based on his definitions, religious-ritual category include literary texts about prophets' and Imams' afflictions, persecutions of their followers, fights in order to advocate religions and creeds, Jesus Christ crucifixion and so on. National-native classification comprises old legends about national heroes who fight against the enemies of their nations, such as epics in Shahnameh (p. 18). Humane-world resistance literature consists of literary texts about race discrimination, slavery, nationalistic wars, civil wars, wars for independence, and world war literature (p. 23).

Up to now, only a few researchers conducted researches on Persian translations of resistance literature in Iran. For example, Farahzad (2017, p.134) in one chapter discussing the various translations of Frantz Fanon's works of resistance literature in Persian speculated on Shari'ati's possible role as either

¹ All translations from Persian are my own.

translator or partial translator. She dated the earliest translation of Fanon to 1970, namely, Fanon's *Toward the African Revolution* (translated by Mohammad Amir Kardan), and dated the first translation of *The Wretched of the Earth*, to 1971. Mousavi Razavi and Allahdaneh (2018) addressed the strategies applied in translating the cultural elements (CEs) of the Persian resistance literature into English. They presented a corpus-based study in order to analyze the Persian books of resistance literature and their English translations based on three separate levels, namely textual, semiotic and paratextual levels. On the textual level, they identified CEs in the Persian books of resistance literature and compared them with their English equivalents. On the semiotic level, the covers of the books, and on the paratextual level, the prefaces by the translators were examined. Their findings indicated that the most frequent translation strategy was retention which implied that the translators seemed to try to preserve the cultural tone of the source in such texts. Farahzad (2011) listed the translations of novels and short stories published in Iran during the Sacred Defense period from all languages into Persian and analyzed their role in the literary polysystem of Iran based on Even-Zohar (1978/2000) during the period. Moreover, she investigated the translational choices in the discourse of the Sacred Defense period based on Farahzad (2009/2012).

Zand Rahimi, et al., (2021) compared Gheysar Aminpour's poems of resistance literature and their English translations by Sa'id Sa'idpour according to the translation quality assessment model of Julianne House. They examined transferring elements of resistance by the translator through comparing the source and target poems and concluded that the translator was not successful in transferring the concepts, i.e. elements of resistance and had just replaced the words with the target equivalents that gave way to literal translations because of the non-acquaintance of the translator with the requirements and specifications of the source literature.

3. Methodology

3.1 Corpus

The corpus of the current quantitative-analytical study was a body of synopses, reviews, translators' prefaces, and blurbs of the novels translated from English to Persian in Iran between 1998 and 2005. In the first part of the study, all novels translated from English into Persian between 1978 and 2005, were searched on the website of the Khaneh-ye Ketab at <http://www.ketab.ir/> and 9585 translations were identified. Translations of other genres were not checked since the study focused only on novels.



3.2 Data Collection

In order to identify translations presenting the above-mentioned themes, the data for each novel were collected from four sources of information: its synopses, its reviews, its translator's preface, and its blurb. The translated novels dealing with themes of class conflict, namely aristocracy, wealth, poverty, great depression in America, life of people in slums, bourgeoisie versus the proletariat, violation of democracy and civil rights, were identified. The translated novels portraying racism in all areas of wealth and income, education, health care, civil rights, life in North America and apartheid in South Africa were also listed. All translated novels representing totalitarianism, based on [Conquest \(1999, p. 74\)](#), were enumerated as well, for instance, translations depicting regimes with extensive political repression, absolute lack of democracy, widespread personality cultism, absolute control over economy, restrictions on speech, mass surveillance, widespread use of state terrorism, concentration camps, repressive secret police, religious persecution or state atheism, the extensive practice of capital punishment, fraudulent elections, if they take place, and potentially state-sponsored mass murder and genocides. All translations of the novels about imperialism, colonialism, and post-colonialism, those representing a complex intercultural encounter between alien intruders and indigenous people, were also listed. The novels concern war memoirs, novels about World War I and World War II, Nazism, fascism, the American literature of the Holocaust, the French revolutionary wars, the Indian wars, wars on terrorism, Vietnam War, civil wars, including the Spanish Civil War, the wars in Asia, wars for independence as well as patriotic wars were presented as well. Eventually, out of all the 9585 translations, 599 translations, including first translations, reprints or retranlations, were identified as the translations of the novels with the above-mentioned themes of resistance.

4. Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

In the second part of the study, following on from [Pym \(2014\)](#), the whole process of translation of the novels of resistance from English to Persian in Iran after the Islamic Revolution between 1978 and 2005 were examined through three interconnected parts: archaeology of the translations, historical criticism, and explanations. The theoretical framework of the present study was translation historiography. [Pym \(2014\)](#) categorizes the research on translation history into three subdivisions: "translation archaeology, historical criticism and explanation":

- 'Translation archaeology' is a set of discourses concerned with answering all or part of the complex question 'who translated what, how, where, when, for whom and with what effect?'

- ‘Historical criticism’ would be the set of discourses that assess the way translations help or hinder progress. Rather than decide whether a translation is progressive for us here and now, properly historical criticism must determine the value of a past translator’s work in relation to the effects achieved in the past.
- ‘Explanation’ Explanation is the part of translation history that tries to say why archaeological artefacts occurred when and where they did, and how they were related to change. Archaeology and historical criticism are mostly concerned with individual facts and texts. Explanation must be concerned with the causation of such data, particularly the causation that passes through power relationships (pp. 5–6).

As the archaeology of the translations, a descriptive annotated bibliography was written. The data concerning each one of the translated novels were tabulated and analyzed. The original titles of the novels, the years of their first publication, the name(s) of their authors, their Persian titles, the name of their translators, and the years of their translations, reprints or the retranlations were all presented through tables for each category (see [Alinouri, 2021](#)). For example, 57 translations, embracing first translations, retranlations or reprints of 10 novels, mostly dystopian novels by Goerge Orwell, related to totalitarianism, including *Animal Farm* which was retranlated or reprinted 33 times during the period under study. Five novels of which were translated for the first time, including *The Other Side of Truth* (2000), *The Assassini* (1990), *Children of the Pearl* (1991), *Sergeant Gettilio* (1971), and *This Perfect Day* (1970) and the other five novels were retranlated or reprinted; 63 translations of 18 resistance novels were identified with the theme of colonialism and post-colonialism. 10 first translations, including *Midnight's Children* (1981) portraying India’s transition from British colonialism to independence and the partition of India, *The Famished Road* (1991), *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1984), *Love and Death in a Hot Country* (1983), and *A Bend in the River* (1979) narrating the search for identity, which is the masterwork of displacement, dispossession, and assimilation. Eight novels were retranlated or reprinted several times, for example *Robinson Crusoe*, the true symbol of the British Empire, was retranlated or reprinted 36 times during the period. 189 translations of 65 resistance novels were placed in the category of racism. 31 novels of which were first translations, e.g. *Remember My Name* dealing with the forced relocation of 100,000 indigenous people from their homes, *The Slave Dancer* (1974), about slave trading, *In Search of April Raintree* (1992), *Paradise* (1999), *Waiting for the Rain* (1987), *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), *No Turning Back: A Novel of South Africa* (1995), *A Time to Kill* (1989), *Beloved* (1987), *Dances with Wolves* (1986), and *Queen* (1993) and the remaining novels were retranlated or reprinted, including *Spartacus*, *Roots* narrating the Afro-American quest for identity, *The Pearl*, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, and *Moby*



Dick, *The Whale*. 163 volumes of translations, including first translations, retranslations or reprints of 51 resistance novels covering class conflict theme were identified. In this category, the first translations of 13 novels, including *Wildflower Girl* (1991), and *Under the Hawthorn Tree* (1990) which are about the years of the famine in Ireland, *Second Generation* (1978), *Angela's Ashes* (1996), *Fist* (1978), *Martin Eden* (1990), were placed, 38 novels, which were retranslated or reprinted, were also presented in this category, including *The Prince and the Pauper*, which was released 32 times during the specified period under study, *A Tale of Two Cities*, which was published 13 times during the period, *Oliver Twist* portraying the image of poverty in the society which appeared 27 times in the translation market during the period under study, *The Grapes of Wrath* summarizing the bitterness of the Great Depression decade and arousing rampant sympathy for the plight of migratory farm workers, which was released five times, and two retranslations and one reprint of *In Dubious Battle*, which chronicles a brief, intense labor strike by migrant apple pickers in Depression-era California. The large number of retranslations and reprints of the novels in the category of class conflict seemed to be due to the stagnant taste of the readers whose reading choices were limited to and controlled by the availability of the translations in the market. This forced readers to read one novel in several translations, or read and re-read what they had read several times before. The first translations of 39 novels with the theme of war, including *The Crash of '79* (1976), which is about the war between Iran and Iraq, *The Kite Runner* (2003), *Lion of Ireland* (1979), *I Am Regina* (1991), *Scattered like Seeds* (1998), *The Dark Room* (2001), *Missing* (1978), *The Painted Bird* (1965), which is about World War II, *Holocaust* (1978), *The Hessian* (1972), Set during the American Revolution, *The Day of the Bomb* (1961), *A Pale View Of Hills* (1982), *First Blood* (1972), *The Winds of War* (1971), and *Reunion* (1971), *Widows* (1981), and *The Sands of Time* (1988) were identified, 45 retranslations or reprints were placed in this category, including *The Moon Is Down*, which was among the banned and clandestine novels written with the purpose to motivate and inspire the resistance movements in occupied countries during the World War II and *The Gadfly*, with the central theme of the nature of a true revolutionary and the reflections on religion and rebellion, *The Yoke and the Star, A Novel of the Cuban Revolution, A Farewell to Arms*, which was reprinted five times in the translation market during the specified period of the study, *Homage to Catalonia*, an autobiographical account by George Orwell of his experience as a volunteer for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. Memoirs in this category include: *Quiet Days in Clichy, I Am Regina, Mother Night, The Diary of a Young Girl*. 10 novels shown in the list in Appendix 6 in [Alinouri \(2021\)](#) cover two themes simultaneously, including *The Iron Hills* covering both totalitarianism and class conflict themes, *Light in August* dealing with class conflict and racism at the same time, *Heart of Darkness, Thunder Rolling in the Mountains, The Last of the Mohicans, Wide Sargasso Sea, The Trees, and Love and Death in a Hot Country* covering both colonialism, post-colonialism and racism issues, *Midnight's*

Children dealing with colonialism, post-colonialism and war, *Forrest Gump* covering class conflict and war themes simultaneously, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* dealing with war and totalitarianism.

In the second part of the archaeology of the identified Persian translations of resistance novels, prolific American novelists of resistance literature, productive Persian translators of resistance literature, the effects of the translations, and their audience were reviewed. Seven historical novels covering themes of human rights and social justice from Howard Fast, the prolific American novelist of resistance literature, were translated into Persian during this period: *The Last Frontier* dealing with the theme of racism, *The Proud and The Free*, and *The Hessian* both dealing with the theme of war, *The American* (1946), *Spartacus* (1951), which was translated ten times during the period by different translators like Ibrahim Yunisi, *Conceived in Liberty* (1939), and *Second generation* (1978). Ayatollah Khamenei advised reading Howard Fast's books in a meeting with editors and chief editors of student journals in 1377 S.H. (1998 A.D.).² Five novels of Toni Morrison, another prolific anti-racism novelist of resistance literature, were translated during the period: *Beloved* (1987) examining the destructive legacy of slavery, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Jazz* (1992), a story of violence and passion, *Paradise* (1998), a richly detailed portrait of a black utopian community. The archaeology of the identified Persian translations of English novels of resistance revealed that translators with different habituses, affiliations and interests over a period of almost three decades translated English novels covering the above-mentioned themes. Some of those translators, such as Mihdi Ghabra'i who translated *The Hessian* by Howard Fast, *Oliver Twist*, *The Kite Runner*, *A House for Mr Biswas*, and *Love and Death in a Hot Country* during the period under study in the present study have attitudes against social injustice (see Shadman et al., 2019). Furthermore, *The Last Frontier* and *The American* both written by Howard Fast were translated during the specified period of the study by Fereydoun Majlisi, who is a political activist and was previously a diplomat. In an interview, he said that he has learned a lot about the history of America through reading Howard Fast's novels.³

English novels of resistance, mostly bestsellers, have satisfied different tastes and have been translated for the mass of people in Iran. Therefore, it seems that during the four historical episodes examined in the present study, resistance literature have been read basically by the mass of people as a source of inspiration and voicing a silent resistance not by a specific group of people, for example well-educated, religious, opposition or political activists. Yet, the effects of the translations of the resistance novels on Iranian readers are different from the

² Retrieved January 3, 2020, from <https://www.isna.ir/news/96072514176/>

³ <https://www.bartarinha.ir/fa/news/385939/>



effects of the novels on the readers in the original context as consequences of the cultural, social and religious differences between the two societies except the periods during which both societies experience the same socio-historical conditions caused by wars, political movements or revolutions (Monsefi, et al., 2021). According to Monsefi, et al. (2021), novels dealing with racism have different effects on readers in Iran from those in the target culture which have experienced such suffering, however, Persian readers may identify themselves with them. To answer the one H, i.e., how were they translated, in the last part of the archaeology of translation by Pym(2014), the researcher of the study reported Farahzad (2011) who analyzed the translational choices in the Persian translations of novels during the period of the Iran-Iraq War as part of her research and concluded that domestication and naturalization were the most dominant strategy used in most translations of the novels published during the Sacred Defense period, translators during the period presented the foreign literature which was similar to and fitted the domestic polysystem and they did not bring anything new into the domestic polysystem. Therefore, the translations were used as means of expanding the earlier patterns used in Persian novels, and new literary contents and styles were not common in the translations of the novels during the Iran-Iraq War (Farahzad, 2011). Her findings for the Persian translations of all the novels published during the period of the Iran-Iraq War can be generalized for the Persian translations of resistance novels published during the Sacred Defense period as one of the four historical episodes of the present study. Yet, finding the answer to “how” of the archaeology of the translation for the remaining historical episodes of the study, can be answered through another elaborate research.

“Historical criticism” concerns the evaluation of the level to which progress was expanded or weakened. According to Pym (2014, p. 5), “rather than decide whether a translation is progressive for us here and now, properly historical criticism must determine the value of a past translator’s work in relation to the effects achieved in the past.” Based on the above suggestions by Pym (2014), the data concerning the identified translations of resistance novels for each administration were analyzed, as written in the following sections.

1978 in Iran was marked by power struggles between various parties and revolutionaries (as cited in Haddadian-Moghaddam, 2014). In 1978, only two novels of resistance literature were translated from English to Persian, namely *The Jungle* and *The Good Earth*. Both of which were classified in the category of class conflict. Following a referendum in 1979, the Islamic Republic was proclaimed, and the clerics gradually seized power. During the administration of President Bani Sadr, the seizure of the US embassy, and the so-called Cultural Revolution, eight retranlations or reprints and no first translation of resistance novels were identified. Alinouri & Farahzad (2021) examined the historiography of Persian translations of novels of resistance literature during the Iran-Iraq war elaborately. In the following part of the study, the identified Persian translations

of English novels of resistance during the two remaining administrations, namely President Hashemi Rafsanjani's, and President Mohammad Khatami's were analyzed. During the eight years of the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran experienced some social and economic recovery. His so-called reconstruction and liberalization programs, however, did not change the inflation rate of 30 percent per annum, and revolutionary principles and factional struggles still prevailed throughout the country (as cited in [Haddadian-Moghaddam, 2014](#)). This period was also marked by the beginning of US sanctions on Iran for its proclaimed support of "international terrorism," which has remained in force up to the present time (as cited in [Haddadian-Moghaddam, 2014](#)).

Table 1

Total Number of the Identified Translations of Each Category of Resistance Literature during Each Period between 1978 and 2005

Period	Class Conflict	Race Discrimination	Colonialism and Post-colonialism	War	Totalitarianism
1978	2	-	-	-	-
1979-1981	3	3	1	-	1
1982-1989	60	47	21	46	18
1990-1997	41	73	20	28	8
1998-2005	57	66	21	67	30

As shown in Table 1, during the administration of President Hashemi Rafsanjani, the most dominant theme was race discrimination amounts to 73 volumes out of the 168 identified translations of resistance novels which sounds to be because many of such novels were listed in 'The Best English-language Fiction of the Twentieth Century' compiled by Brian Kunde (see [Boloori, 2015](#), Appendix 1.) that might persuade the publishers to publish their translations. In addition, the total number of the category of class conflict was the most of all the other categories during the Iran-Iraq War which seemed to be due to the fact that challenging class conflict, which was a social concern long before the Islamic Revolution and an impetus to it, became focal in the first two decades after the Islamic Revolution as well through retranslations and reprints of the previous



translations dealing with class conflict theme. The high number of the retranslations and the reprints of the previous translations during this period seems to be in line with the claim by Monsefi, et al. (2021) that “the author’s reputation, international awards won by the work, TV series made based on the work, and global bestsellers” are the criteria for selecting literary works to be translated by publishers.

During President Mohammad Khatami’s administration, 236 translations, including first translations, retranslations and reprints, of 199 novels of resistance, as a whole, were published from English into Persian and more freedom in the area of book publishing emerged. Mohajerani, who was Khatami’s first Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, believed in a kind of “open-door policy in the area of publishing” to reduce the strict measures against book publishing to the minimum (as cited in Boloori, 2015, p. 105). Several translators were perhaps striving to achieve their individual aims; the coming together of these aims may have created some kind of competition, tension, synergy, fashion, call it what you will; the reception conditions were such that all these manuscripts could find publishers. Table 2 shows the percentage of the total number of the identified translations of resistance novels in each period to the total number of the published translations of the period.

Table 2

Percentage of the Total Number of the Identified Translations of Resistance Novels in Each Period to the Total Number of the Published Translations of the Period

Period	Total Number of the Published Translations	Total Number of the Identified Translations of Resistance Novels	Percent
1978	3	2	%67
1979-1981	49	8	%16
1982-1989	1063	185	%17
1990-1997	2233	168	%7
1998-2005	6136	236	%4

As shown in the above table, the percent is the most of all the periods during the Iran-Iraq War which seems to be in line with the claim by the Kumiri (2001) that the government ordered and supported most literary works related to the

Sacred Defense and resistance in order to inspire resistance among Iranians.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, out of the 9587 translations of English novels translated for the first time, retranslated or reprinted between 1978 and 2005 in Iran, only 599 ones (6%) were identified as translations of resistance novels, including first translations, retranslations and reprints. This means that Iranians during this period were basically reading translated novels with themes other than resistance. Out of the 2233 translations of English novels translated for the first time, retranslated or reprinted during the administration of President Hashemi Rafsanjani, 168 translations (7%) were identified as translations of resistance novels. Out of the 6136 translations of English novels translated for the first time, retranslated or reprinted during the administration of President Khatami, 236 translations (4%) were identified as translations of resistance novels. It seems that more books were imported to the country and translation of Western literary works was generally encouraged. More first translations and less retranslations or reprints of the translations of resistance novels. However, the percent of the total number of the translations of resistance novels to the total number of the published translations of the period was the most of all during the Iran-Iraq War which can be attributed to the patronage of the government in order to support the literary works related to the Sacred Defense and resistance in order to motivate people to defend their homeland.

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