

Paratextual Mediation in Ibesch's Rendition of Blunt's "A Pilgrimage to Nejd" : A Typological and Functional Analysis

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Abstract :

In the narrative of translation, the concept of paratext plays a central role in shaping how a text is processed. A seminal contribution to this concept is offered by Genette (1997), who defines paratext as a "threshold" between the text and external discourse. It encompasses elements such as titles, covers, footnotes, introductions, and annotations, all of which mediate between the reader and the main text. In this respect, this paper investigates how paratextual interventions influence the textual accessibility and interpretation of translated texts. It further questions the function of paratextual elements as either needed interpretative tools or potential disruptions. By examining the paratextual strategies employed by Ibesch in his translation of Blunt's "A Pilgrimage to Nejd", this research used a qualitative textual analysis of Ibesch's use of annotations, footnotes, and other textual interventions. The study further examined the extent to which a text's processing is either compromised or enhanced by means of these elements.. Within the confines of this work, the findings corroborated the broader debate on translation agency, the limits of textual intervention, and the growing role of paratext in cross cultural textual dissemination.

Keywords: Paratext; Text; Translation; Annotations; Footnotes; Illustrations; Title.

1. Introduction

Paratext, along with its different constituents that shape the reception and interpretation of a text, has gained a prime position in translation discipline, from prefaces and footnotes to cover illustrations and title choices, these features act as mediators between the source text and the target audience, impacting the way the content is apprehended. Delineating

paratextual interventions is, thus, crucial for assessing the impact of translation on meaning construction and cultural adaptation. The translator's role in shaping meaning clearly transcends words to using paratextual features where the dynamics of textual presentation and reception is explored to its fullest.

Genette introduced and systematized the concept of paratext by devoting an entire book to it, highlighting its significance in textual interpretation. The terminology has varied among scholars, with terms such as "the margins of the text", "parallel discourse", and "co-text" being used interchangeably. However, the most commonly used and widely accepted term among most researchers remains "paratext".

Serving as a bridge between the text and the reader, paratext, which is a concept from literary theory, refers to a potentially infinite "diverse set of practices and discourses" (Genette, 1987, p. 8), evolving in both time and space. It includes elements such as titles, subtitles, author names, generic indications, illustrations, back covers, dedications, prefaces footnotes, publisher's commentary, and writers' correspondence. Its main function is to frame the text, introduce it, enhance it (or even to promote it), and "make the text present," in order to ensure its visibility in the world, its "reception," and its consumption, in the form of a book, at least today." (Genette, 1987, p. 7).

As mentioned earlier, Genette characterizes the paratext as "threshold" that exists between the text and external discourse, an "undefined zone" that lacks clear boundaries between the inside (the text itself) and the outside (editorial and cultural influences on the text's interpretation) (Genette, 1997, pp. 1-2). More than a gateway for readers, this luminal space fulfils the pivotal function of monitoring the reader's engagement with the text. Titles and prefaces, for instance, preempt expectations prior to the reader's first contact with the text, while footnotes and annotations may intervene during the reading process. This underscores the relevance of paratext in cross cultural and linguistic contexts as outlined by Bachelor (2018). He argues that paratexts serve as "mediators of

meaning”, influencing not only how texts are framed but also how translators justify their choices and navigate cultural nuances (p. 32). In a similar vein, Venuti (1995) emphasizes the translator’s visibility, urging for a greater awareness of the translator’s presence through strategic textual and paratextual choices. Tymoczko (2007), likewise, underscores the ideological positioning inherent in translational acts, particularly in paratextual apparatuses that serve to shape reception and authority. These perspectives collectively enrich the conceptual framework of this study by situating paratexts not only as framing devices, but as ideological and cultural signposts.

Building on these theoretical insights, the present study turns to a concrete textual case to examine how these dynamics unfold in practice. It adopts a qualitative textual analysis method to explore the types, roles, and implications of translator’s notes in the English translation of Blunt in *A Pilgrimage to Nejd* by Ibesch. This particular translation was selected due to its rich use of paratextual interventions and the translator’s visible role in framing cultural and ideological references across linguistic boundaries. The data consist of selected paratextual interventions—specifically footnotes, annotations, and other translator-inserted notes—chosen for their illustrative and interpretive value. The selection criteria were based on the frequency, nature, and function of these notes across the text, with a focus on interventions that reveal cultural, historical, or linguistic mediation.

As it aims to explore the various types of translator’s notes, their specific functions, and their impact on translation, the study starts with contextualizing the main conceptual components of this research, paratextual elements, in the rendition of the text under study, “*A Pilgrimage to Nejd*”. Then, the study classifies the typology of the translator’s notes into distinct categories, including, among others, documentary notes, encyclopedic notes, linguistic notes, and commentary notes. The paper moves to highlight the applications and implications of the translator’s notes. The final part is the conclusion where findings are synthesized, reflecting on the translator’s role in meaning construal and offering recommendations for best practices.

2. Paratextual Elements in “A Pilgrimage to Nejd”

The term paratext refers to all the elements that accompany the main text, without being directly part of it. The function of paratext is to guide the reading, place the text in its context, or accompany it with certain necessary information. This can affect how the reader interprets the text.

Paratextual elements are, hence, not merely supplementary material but strategic tools that improve accessibility and navigate reader interpretation. It is worth noting that the translator's choices as regards paratextual modifications can deeply mould the receiver's engagement with the text. Even more, such elements may indirectly influence ideological and cultural perceptions, reflecting editorial and translator intentions. Paratext includes visual elements that surround the text, such as :

2.1 Title as a Paratextual Element :

Many critics have been interested in titrology, including Duchet, Hoek and Genette, who have all treated the title as an integral part of the paratext. Hoek remains the true founder of titrology through his work "La marque du titre" (1981) (i.e. "The Title Mark) where he approaches it from different aspects, including a purely semiotic perspective by studying its functions and focusing on its connotations as* he considers it as a semiotic sign that distinguishes texts. He adds that it is an act of speech, because the use of titrology is an end in itself to define the novel and participate in the creation of a social interaction. He defines it as follows: "The title is that part of the inaugural marks of the text which ensures its designation and which can extend over the title page, the cover and the spine of the titled volume"(Hoek, 1981, p. 6). As for Ricardou, he mentioned the title in his famous article "Problèmes du Nouveau Roman (i.e. Problems of the New Novel", explaining that it is a means of writing and a moment of separation between the text and the title, considering it as a text itself, so he gave it two names: the first is the “onomatext”, and the second is the “overtext” (Ricardou, 1967). A literary work's title is, then, not just a label- it captures the essence of the text and often determines its early reception.

The title is mainly used to identify the literary work through offering a first impression of its content, genre or tone. The title is often designed to attract the reader's attention, encouraging them to explore the content of the book. It can be ambiguous, explicit or even controversial, depending on what the author or publisher is trying to achieve. It can sometimes reveal the main theme of the literary work directly or indirectly.

Some titles have a symbolic or metaphorical value, which enriches the meaning of the literary work. The title is also influenced by editorial considerations, such as increasing sales or suitability for the target audience. The choice of language, whether formal, poetic or academic, can reflect the tone of a literary work.

The title of the book under study is: "A Pilgrimage to Nejd", translated by Ibesch as : "A Journey to Nejd", to not confuse it with the technical meaning of Hajj, which is one of the five pillars of Islam, and whose purpose is to purify the pilgrim so that he can obtain forgiveness from God. Pilgrimage is therefore a spiritual journey undertaken with the aim of reaching a sacred place, often linked to a religious belief. This journey is generally associated with a religious practice or a search for purification or blessing. The translator's decision to render the title "A Pilgrimage to Nejd", as "A Journey to Nejd" reveals the delicate balance between fidelity to the original and cultural sensitivity. Titles indeed, serve as semiotic gateways, setting expectations and affecting interpretations, making them an indispensable component of paratextual analysis. By delicately altering the title, the translator ensures that it aligns with the book's travel-focused narrative instead of eliciting religious connotations, thereby avoiding potential misinterpretations.

In this connection, a journey can have a purpose of discovery, entertainment, work, exploration, adventure, and so on, as is the case with the story of the writer Lady Anne Blunt, where the journey is not associated with a religious practice or a sacred place.

The subtitle *The Cradle of the Arab Race* was not translated as "The Cradle of the Arab Race," as it conflicts with anthropology, but rather as

“The Cradle of the Arab Tribes,” because race refers to biological or genetic aspects, while tribe refers to social lineage and common genealogies that determine the connections between individuals within a specific social group. The book refers to the Arab tribal clans that have helped shape the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Arab peninsula.

2.2 Cover as a Paratextual Element :

The book cover serves as is one of the critical paratextual components acting as the first textual threshold that announces the book and promotes its marketability. It has acquired capital importance for everything related to its design, its writing, and all the symbolic manifestations it contains. Beyond its function as a protective outer layer, the cover is a semiotic and symbolic space that encodes visual, typographic and textual cues. This is why it has been the subject of semiotic, literary, and even translation studies, which have detailed its connotations and various dimensions. According to Genette (1997), paratextual elements like covers act as intermediaries that introduce, frame, and condition a reader's experience of a text. In a similar way, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) contend that visual design is a language in itself, capable of encoding cultural meanings and ideologies that affect the reception of a work. Semiotically, the book cover operates on two distinct expressive planes. The Formal System – encompasses all visual elements, including images, colors, artistic illustrations, and photographic representations. And the Typographic System concerns textual components, such as font styles, sizes, arrangement, and positioning.

Together, these elements function as visual manifestations of writing, size, colors, and images. A well-designed cover is one that displays a condensed summary of the book's themes, offering hints about its tone, setting, and subject matter.

The importance of the cover, therefore, lies in the fact that it constitutes one of the non-linguistic modes of communication that often serve to inform the recipient of the novel's content or refer them to it by offering them some reading opportunities before entering the text. It is the

first and most important textual threshold through which the recipient penetrates the depths of the text. This raises a fundamental question: To what extent do the visual signs on a book cover accurately reflect the content of the narrative text? And how do these semiotic and connotative dimensions align with—or sometimes distort—the thematic patterns within the book?

The original cover of “A Pilgrimage to Nejd” features a portrait of Lady Anne Blunt in Arab costume painted by Molony. The image reinforces her position as a traveler and ethnographer. However, the translated version published by Al-Mada, presents a surprisingly different visual representation. Instead of Lady Anne, the cover features a portrait of her husband Wilfrid Scawen Blunt dressed in Arab attire holding a pure bred Arabian horse. The horse dominates the frame of the book with the title written in a larger font than the name of the author, the translator or the publisher. The cover of the translated version therefore includes information indicating the name of the author, the title and subtitle of the book, its genre, the series and the publisher, in different sizes and colors. Part of the image is cut out to reveal the name of the series. The fourth page is a portrait of Anne and Wilfrid Blunt in black and white.

The dominant brick color on the book cover is often associated with richness and depth. It can symbolize durability, strength, and connection to nature. It may also convey feelings of warmth, comfort, and security and evokes the idea of cozy homes or places among desert dwellers where one feels at home. Below is an excerpt from the book which has a semantic and connotative dimension linked to the fascinating landscape of the desert.

2.3 Illustration as Cultural Reframers in Translation

Illustration, as a paratextual component, plays a decisive role in framing the reader's expectations of the text before they engage with it. It attracts the reader's attention and provides visual cues that create a first impression of the subject of the work. It is a visual marketing tool, but it is also a primary means of communication that serves as a bridge between the author's vision and their readers' imagination. Illustrations can be symbolic

or descriptive. They further offer a visual representation that refines in many ways the written narrative. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, illustrations as a form of non-verbal communication, serve multiple functions. They can, for example, reinforce themes, trigger off emotions, and contextualize historical, geographical and cultural references that might be unfamiliar to the audience. On the other hand, in translated works, the addition or omission of certain illustrations can alter the reader's perception. Beyond aesthetic considerations, illustrations carry implicit messages that influence how a text is received in different linguistic and cultural contexts.

Recent scholarship on paratextuality in translated works-particularly case studies involving Middle Eastern and Islamic texts-has shown how illustrations are strategically adapted or replaced to align with target audience expectations and cultural sensitivities (e.g., Alvstad, 2020; Tahir-Gürçağlar, 2019). Studies such as the analysis of Slovak retranslations of *A Christmas Carol* (Raffi et al., 2023), spatial shifts in paratextual layout in Chinese editions of *Charlotte's Web*, and the feminist framing of Shaarawi's memoirs in English-have also demonstrated how illustrations and visual paratexts contribute significantly to the ideological positioning and cultural reframing of translated works. These insights foreground the importance of visual discourse in translation studies and reinforce the premise that illustrations are not ancillary, but rather integral to textual negotiation.

Building on this scholarly momentum, comparative research in translation studies and journals such as *Meta* and *Translation Spaces* also reflects the evolving role of illustrations in shaping reception across languages. These insights underscore the importance of examining illustration not only as an aesthetic element but also as a politically and culturally responsive tool. Nevertheless, there are those who think that illustration is anti-literature, because anyone can draw what the author has stubbornly refused to show. Illustration presupposes a certain philosophy of the object.

List of Illustrations to Vol. I. of "Pilgrimage to Nejd"

The book under study includes a vast collection of illustrations, each fulfilling a specific function. The list below details these illustrations, spanning portraits, landscapes, historical sites, and cultural artifacts. Together, they reinforce the book's themes of travel, cultural encounters, and historical documentation.

<i>Frontispiece.</i> Portrait of Lady Anne Blunt in her Arab Costume (by Molony)
P. XXVI Pilgrim Banner
P. 45 Salkhad
P. 63 Run to Earth
P. 80 Sand-storm in the Wady er-Rajel
P. 83 Kâf
P. 104 Ghazû in the Wady Sirhân
P. 112 Castle of Jôf
P. 120 The Oasis of Jôf
P. 149 A Nejd Sheep
P. 160 The Nefûd or Great Red Sand Desert of Arabia
P. 186 A Delûl Rider
P. 212 Reception at Haïl
P. 214 The Great Kahwah
P. 250 Ibn Rashid's Stables at Haïl
P. 256 Evening with the Emir
P. 273 Our House at Haïl
<i>At the End.</i> Map of Nejd

List of Translator's Illustrations

P.17: Anne Wilfrid Blunt in Arab costume
P.18: Anne and Wilfrid Blunt late 19th century before their separation
P.19: Lady Anne Blunt at the age of 75 around 1912 / Lady Anne Blunt in Arab costume / Judith Blunt (Lady Wentworth)
P.20: Lady Anne Blunt on the horse "Poem" / Lady Anne Blunt in Arab costume with an Arab mare
P.21: Medallion representing Balkrif / The traveler Balkrif, British ambassador to Uruguay / The traveler Balkrif performing Umrah wearing a turban / The traveler Balkrif performing Umrah wearing a tarbouch
P.22: Sheikh Abdelkader Al-Djazairi in Damascus in 1862 / Madhat Pasha, Governor of Damascus and his private secretary
P.23: The Bedouin tent of Anne and Wilfrid Blunt
P.24: Muhammad al-Abdullah al-Uruq
P.25: Sheikh Faris Al-Saffouq Al-Jarba
P.26: Wilfred Blunt at the age of 65
P.27: Hail City
P.28: The city of Sakaka and the desert around Hail
P.29: The house where Anne and Wilfrid Blunt lived in Hail
P.30: The pink house of Sheikh Obeid Farm in Egypt
P.31: The garden of Sheikh Obeid Farm in Cairo
P.47: Pilgrim Banner
P.88: Salkhad
P.104: Head of an Arabian foal
P.122: Kaf

P.148: Jôf Fortress
P.178: Nejdi sheep
P.204: The camel Shaqran
P.207: The shepherd of camels
P.209: Drawing of Lady Anne Blunt in Arab costume
P.210: Drawing of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, husband of Lady Anne
P.211: Sandstorm in Wadi Rajel
P.212: Invasion at Wadi Al-Serhan
P.213: Oasis of Jôf
P.214: Nefûd, the Great red sand desert of Al-Jazirah
P.215: The Prince's Palace in Hail
P.216: Ibn Rashid's stable in Hail
P.217: Ibn Rashid's horses
P.218: Pilgrims leave Hail for Mecca
P.219: The pools of Zubaydah
P.220: The scene of Ali (Najaf)
P.221: The granite mountains of Shammar and the effect of the phenomenon of mirage
P.222: Aqdat mountain fort
P.223: Antique drawings and engravings on the rock of Shammar mountain
P.246: Our welcome in Hail
P.276: An evening with the prince
P.288: Our house in Hail
P.300: Hamoud Ibn Rushd

P.320: Edible locust
P.331: End of a hunt
P.358: Iranian pilgrims in the front line of the Hajj caravan
P.369: Wilfred and Lady Anne Blunt
P.370: The Blunt couple's journey in northern Arabia
P.371: Ruins of Bosra
P.374: Shaqsaq well / Stopping by the well
P.375: Invasion at Oued Al-Sirhan
P.376: The palace of Al-Jawf
P.377: The Show at Al-Jawf
P.378: Jawhar, the Ruler of Al-Jawf
P.379: Mountain near Sakaka
P.380: A Canal of the Nafud Canals
P.381: Rocks of Al-Jabba / View of Al-Jabba
P.382: Al-Rashid Dynasty
P.383: Our Camp near Hail
P.384: Joining the Prince in Hail
P.385: Inside the Palace of Hail
P.386: The Courtyard of the Palace of Hail
P.387: Our House in Hail
P.388: Ibn Rushd's Stables / An Evening at Ibn Rushd's
P.389: Cruisers on Horseback under the Walls of Hail
P.390: Wild Palm Trees near the Knot
P.391: Grand tamarisk

P.392: The phenomenon of the mirage
P.393: The flag of البيرق
P.394: Taiba marsh
P.395: Edible locusts / Hunting hyenas
P.396: Abdullah's basin
P.397: Oued Roza / Pilgrims' camp
P.398: The ascent of Aqaba
P.399: The sea of Najaf and the scene of Ali
P.400: The walls of the scene of Ali and the pilgrims / A view from the roof of the residence in Baghdad
P.413: Sheikh of Palmyra, Muhammad al-Abdullah, in his youth
P.417: A drawing of Muhammad al-Abdullah in his old age
P.418: Sheikh Muhammad Al-Abdullah as an old man with one of his sons / Sheikh Muhammad Al-Abdullah with his two sons and grandchildren

The abovementioned list offers significant information that can situate the audience in the narrative's frame. Information types include historical and cultural figures where numerous portraits of Anne and Wilfrid Blunt are provided, highlighting their immersion in Arabian culture. Visual documentation of eminent historical figures, like Sheikh Abdelkader Al-Djazairi and Madhat Pasha are also part of the list. On the other hand, illustrations of traditional Bedouin tents, tribal leaders, and desert life that shed light on the lifestyle, architecture, and traditions of the Arabian Peninsula hold an important place on the list. Depictions of key cities such as Hail and Sakaka next to images of palaces, fortresses, and ancient ruins, for instance, supplies the audience with the historical and spatial context of the narrative. The audience is further immersed in the natural landscapes, including the Nafud Desert and the granite mountains of Shammar. Images of pilgrims departing for Mecca, the pools of Zubaydah, and the scene of

Ali (Najaf) underscore the religious and spiritual dimensions of the book. More than an aesthetic choice, the book's extensive use of illustrations is a narrative strategy as these images act as visual anchors offering readers with insights into the historical, cultural, and geographical dimensions of the text. Beyond visual illustrations, the embodiment of culture is further conveyed through clothing, another paratextual dimension with symbolic weight.

Clothing as a Cultural Symbol in "A Journey to Nejd"

Human beings express themselves through clothing, a symbol of cultural communication. In the past, clothing symbolized social status. In many societies, clothing functions as a marker of cultural status, distinguishing individuals based on class, profession, or cultural affiliation and "Pilgrimage to Nejd" is no exception. In the book, attire is a symbolic construct that reflects the social structures, traditions, and aesthetics of the Arab world. Clothing, therefore, reveals the wearer's position in their society, gender, and even their role in nomadic or urban settings..There is no doubt that the choice of clothing possesses a network of cultural symbols closely linked to identity. The Arab dress code expresses a rich cultural aesthetic, in harmony with local visions and characteristics. Among the most prominent garments worn by the people in "Pilgrimage to Nejd" and its Arabic rendition "Journey to Nejd" are :

The turban : A piece of cloth wrapped around the head. Originally white, but later adopting different shapes and colors that distinguish different regions. It symbolizes dignity, status, and even tribal affiliation.

Al-Milhfa: A woolen outer garment worn by women over her clothes, providing both modesty and protection against harsh weather.

The hood: A head covering, available in multiple colors, with black being the most common.

Caftan: Derived from the Persian "khiftan" and the Turkish "kaftan", this open-fronted, belted garment, made of silk or cotton, is worn by men, women, and children, often as a sign of elegance.

Taylasan: Originating from the Persian word "talshan" this large veil drapes over the head and shoulders, designed to shield against the sun, making it an essential piece in the desert environment.

Tarboosh: A head covering derived from the Persian word "sarboosh," meaning head covering, later adapted into Arabic as "sharboosh."

Al-Ghandoura: A long, flowing jacket similar to the Jellaba but without a covering. The short-sleeved version is particularly suited for summer heat.

Burnous: A sleeveless woolen cloak with a pointed hood, traditionally worn by warriors and later adopted by the Sepahia (French cavalry units of the African army, which existed between 1834 and 1964).

Caftan: (Festive Version): A ceremonial garment of honor and celebration worn by men (particularly in Turkey between the 13th to the 19th centuries).

Jellaba: A long sheath-like garment made from a single rectangular piece of fabric with stitched edges, often with hollow sleeves and a head covering. The detailed depictions of clothing in "Journey to Nejd" shows the profound role that attire plays in defining identity, status, and cultural heritage. Rising above mere fabric; they are symbols of history, adaptation, and aesthetic expression. Through its exploration of Arab dress, "A Journey to Nejd" emphasizes the inextricable relationship between material culture and society's intangible dimensions of identity and belonging.

2.4 Footnotes or Translator's Notes as Agents of Interpretation :

Opinions are divided on the relevance and necessity of translator's notes, which are added to the original text. Some critics vehemently condemn them, considering them an easy way out, a mark of failure, a proof of incompetence, or even a humiliating form of dishonor. This sentiment is famously captured by Aury who states : "the footnote is the translator's shame..." (Aury, 1963 : XI). Others argue for their indispensable value in preserving meaning and navigating context. The question is why should they be systematically rejected if they enhance the reader's comprehension and maintain the integrity of the text ? Don't they contribute to the re-expression of the meaning that is thus distributed between the text and these

additional pieces of information ? Don't translator's notes demonstrate the translator's concern for intellectual and professional probity, torn between their duties to the author and their readers ? They undeniably have an ethical dimension-an effort to remain faithful to the original text while making it accessible to a new audience. By integrating their notes, the translators recognize the intrinsic tension in their role: they must balance loyalty to the author's words (accuracy) with the necessity to ensure clarity for readers unfamiliar with the source text (relevance).

2.4.1 Explicative Notes : Clarifying Cultural Density

An explanatory note (or explicative note) is a footnote that serves to clarify a particular point, provide additional information, or clarify concepts in a specific context. It can be used to make a subject more understandable. It often presents detailed development, which helps to better grasp the meaning or scope of an idea, a procedure, or a text. The length of the note can vary depending on the complexity of the subject to be clarified. The main objective is to facilitate understanding by providing additional details on a point that could be confusing. In translation, explanatory notes are particularly used for:

a. Clarifying cultural and historical references :

Clarifying a cultural or historical reference involves explaining or clarifying a specific element that refers to a cultural or historical event, custom, or personality, often to aid in understanding its meaning or impact. This may be necessary when the reference in question is little known, complex, or set in a particular context. Here are some examples from the book "A Pilgrimage to Nejd" :

"It is rare to meet anywhere in the North an Arab who has crossed the Great Nefūd".

"Nejd, in the imagination of the northern Arabs, is an immense way off, and no one has ever been known to go there from Damascus" (Source text). This is an exaggeration. In the history of the Arabian Peninsula, travel between the northern region (the Levant) and Najd was part of Arab life and their

commercial and cultural movements. Since ancient times, this route has connected the agricultural and urban areas of the Levant with the desert regions of Najd, where caravans constantly traveled for trade and cultural exchange (footnotes 33; 52).

“Before the birth of her first child a dispute arose as to its parentage” (S.T). A woman should not violate ALLAH's law by ruling on the waiting period (العدة), which He established to prevent this shameful situation. (p.57).

“The matter, as all such matters are in the desert, was referred to arbitration, and the mother’s assertion was put to the test by a live coal being placed upon her tongue” (S.T). Bachiâa (البشعة) method used by tribes to judge the innocence or guilt of the accused and the judge is by fortune-telling (footnote p.57).

“The Druses of the Hauran say that they are Arabs who came here with the immediate successors of the prophet from the south; that the Jebel was at that time inhabited by Rûmi (Greeks), whose descendants still live here and are Christians” (S.T). Which is false. Before the Islamic conquest of the Levant, Syria was a Byzantine colony and its inhabitants were Syriacs (descendants of the Arameans) and Arabs (p.102).

“Reddish stuff” (S.T). This is the well-known henna dye (p.261).

The author's imagination is betrayed by his ignorance of tribal politics (p.286).

Absurdity! The presence of Sennacherib, king of Assyria (705-671 Before J.C) in a ruined place (p.307).

In the language of the desert, "al-Baqa'a" means a dry year (p.321).

b. Explain the motivation for a proper name, a tribe a place or an animal:

Proper names, whether they refer to tribes, places or people, or even animals are often loaded with history and cultural meanings. For example, the name of a tribe may refer to a geographical feature, a significant event or a value important to the group. In this way, the name becomes a vector of

memory and transmission of a collective identity across generations. In translation, preserving these names faithfully and accurately is important since any mistranslation can lead to distorted perceptions of history and culture. Below are examples from the text and their Cultural Significance :

Personal Names & Tribal Affiliations

Mohammed ibn Arûk (p.50); Faris and Jedaan (p.51); El-Homeydi ibn Meshur (p.264, p.271); Hormuzd Rassam (p.316); The two brothers, Farhan and Faris, sons of the Sheikh of the Shammar tribe (p.339); The Roala (Rwala Bedouins) (p.52); Bender's brothers (p.233); Karieteyn (p.68, p.138); Metém village (p.106); The animal "Oryx Beatrix" (p.236, p.254).

"The name of Gomussa or the "scratcher" (S.T). This name has no meaning of scratching or scratching, as the author says (p.57).

"To this they are said to owe their name of Beni Sokkhr, children of the rocks (S.T). Sokkhr is the name of the grandfather of the tribe and has no relation to rocks or stones (p.111).

"Hazna and Fassal" (S.T). The author writes Bedouin names far removed from their correct pronunciation: Hassna and Fazal (p.12S).

"Zellemet Ibn Rashid" (S.T). The sentence was originally written as Zellemet Ibn Rashid, in the singular, but what the translator proved is correct. (p.152).

"Meskakeh" (S.T). The author always writes the name of the city of Soukakeh as Meskakeh, which is a mistake.

"This he calls the road, the road of Abu Zeyd (S.T). In the desert terminology of the Arabian Peninsula, "Al-khil" means a path through the desert sands or between its dunes (p.192).

Deformation of transcription of Arabic names into English like Ibn Rakhis into Ibn Rahîs, the letter kha into h or k and the letter ha into kh (p.237).

The author wrote his name: Izzar, and we think it means Hazza, because there is no name for Izzar in Arabic (p.324). Each of these names carries with it a distinct cultural or historical identity. A case in point is

the Shammar tribe which is one of the most historically significant Bedouin tribes, known for its warrior traditions and nomadic lifestyle. Hence, any mistranslation of these names brings with it the risks of erasing the historical and cultural weight they bear.

c. Communicate any kind of information presumed to be unknown to readers :

This requires a clear approach to ensure good understanding and assimilation of the information. Practical examples, analogies or illustrations help make the information more accessible and anchor the concepts in the readers' reality. As examples:

“The Agheyls will be one clique, the Tudmuri another, and the Christians a third, so that though they may quarrel with one another, they are never likely to unite against us” (S.T). This is the principle of English policy in the East: playing on the strings of sectarianism and on the principle of "divide and conquer" (p.76).

“Dances and songs, in which Dowass and the soldiers took part” (S.T). This is what is known as the Najdi Ardah, which is a type of enthusiastic chant used to display the strength of the tribe during seasons and occasions, or when war breaks and after victory over enemies (p.156).

The only other manufactures of Jôf that I heard of, are cartridge belts... (S.T). The word “Fashk” is familiar, as it is closer to the term Bedouin in its colloquial pronunciation, which has heritage value (p.159).

“The first sign of Wahhabism” (S.T). In the 19th century, Western authors used the term "Wahhabism" to refer to a distinct religious doctrine, which is wrong, because there is no Wahhabi doctrine. It is more appropriate to speak of the Salafi Islamic movement founded by Imam Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab.

Whether seen as unnecessary intrusions or indispensable elements in ensuring a faithful transmission of meaning, a well-placed translator's note always enhances the reader's understanding while preserving the original author's intent. It is the overuse of footnotes, nevertheless, that can

disrupt the flow of reading. The translator's task becomes, thus, maintaining discretion and balance.

2.4.2 Encyclopedic Notes : Bridging Cultural Gaps

An encyclopedic note is a form of explanatory note or commentary, typically used in translations to deliver the results of the translator's in depth research. This detailed information is often derived from documentary research, to supplement or clarify elements of the main text. In the specific case of a translation, the encyclopedic note helps give readers a broader understanding of terms, concepts, or cultural references that are not immediately understandable

The encyclopedic note often uses external sources such as reference works, specialized articles or academic studies. This practice ensures that the information provided is reliable and verifiable, and offers the reader the possibility of continuing their research on the subject. By offering well-researched background information, these notes enhance the reader's comprehension of historical, social, or linguistic references that might otherwise remain obscure.

Examples of Encyclopedic Notes in Translation :

Legal and Social Customs of the Bedouins

On the laws of revenge among the Bedouins, See our book : Customs and characteristics of the Arabs of Ruwala (p.79). Clarification : the concept of revenge (Thar or Diyya), among Bedouin tribes, is profoundly inculcated in their customary law. Tribal justice is regulated by blood feuds and compensation systems, ensuring, thereby, social balance and deterrence against misconduct. Such customs persist relatively across some Arab tribal societies.

Forms of Address among the Bedouins

It is a good custom among the Bedouins to address their sheikhs and leaders by their names, without necessarily using titles or honorifics (p.251). Clarification : As opposed to many communities where titles signify respect,

Bedouin culture often prioritizes egalitarianism over formal hierarchy through the direct use of names fostering interpersonal respect.

2.4.3. Commentary Notes : Translators' Ideological Presence

Unlike an encyclopedic note, which is purely informative, a commentary note offers interpretation, insight, or correction when necessary. A commentary note allows the translator to go beyond explaining a term by commenting, or even critiquing the author's statements.

Examples of Commentary Notes in Translation :

Misattributing the Origins of a Tribe

"The Beni Sokkhr are really the Beni Issachar, a lost tribe" (S.T). Commentary: There is no reason to attribute Sakhr to the tribes of the Children of Israel, but they are one of the most famous pure Arab tribes (p.84). Misrepresentation of Druze Religious Practices

"Huseyn has only one wife" (S.T). Commentary: Unlike mainstream Islamic sects, polygamy is strictly forbidden among the Druze (p.100).

2.4.4. Explanatory Notes: Resolving Ambiguity without Interpretation

An explanatory note is a note in which the translator develops the author's thoughts on a specific point. It seeks to refine the author's ideas to ensure a clearer understanding for the reader.

Examples of Explanatory Notes in Translation :

Racial Bias in Colonial-Era Writing

"Lastly, the slave Awwad has gone. Like most negroes he had too good an opinion of himself, and insisted on being treated as something more than a servant, and on having a donkey to ride" (S.T). Explanatory note: This passage reflects a racially prejudiced perception of Black individuals. It also shows the Eurocentric and imperialist discourse prevalent in 19th-century British travel writing, where African and Arab individuals were often depicted as inferior or subservient (p.89, p.174).

Criticism of Urban Society in Syria

“This is the first time we have received hospitality absolutely gratis in a town, for even when staying with Mohammed’s father at Tudmur, the women of the family had eagerly asked for money” (S.T). Explanatory note: The author’s negative portrayal of urban Syrians contrasts sharply with their idealized view of Bedouin hospitality. This statement reinforces the common orientalist trope of the “noble Bedouin” versus the “greedy city dweller.” The author appears to frame their experience within a moral dichotomy, where nomadic Arabs embody purity and generosity, while city inhabitants are depicted as driven by material gain. The Author’s negative portrayal of urban Syrians contradicts blatantly this idealized view of Bedouin hospitality. This statement reinforces the author’s arrogance and campaign against the greed of city dwellers in Syria (p.92).

Mistaken Identification of Ancient Scripts

- “On the lintel of the doorway there is or rather has been, an inscription in some ancient character, perhaps Himyaritic...”

Explanatory note: The script mentioned by the author is not Southern Himyarite, but Safaitic, which it is one of the ancient northern Arabic dialects. Safaitic inscriptions are commonly found from the Hijaz and Najd regions to the Palmyra desert, reflecting a distinct linguistic heritage separate from South Arabian scripts (p.127).

Linguistic Clarification on Ancient Inscriptions

“Wilfrid found several inscriptions in the Sinaïtic character upon them” (S.T). Explanatory note: This writing system was widely used among nomadic groups across the Arabian Peninsula and the Syrian Desert. (p.226).

2.4.5. Reader's Notes: Framing Interpretation Before Engagement

A reader’s note is a directional note in which the translator suggests that the reader consult another part of the work or does some additional reading that may enhance their understanding of the text. Unlike an encyclopedic note, which provides contextual background, or

an explanatory note, which expands on the author's thoughts, a reader's note serves initially as a reference tool-directing the reader to other sections of the same book, external sources, or even his own notes. Through this note, the translator can recommend books or articles that help the reader better understand a specific context, a complex notion or a theme addressed in the text. The translator can also refer his audience to his own notes where he can also indicate that he has developed details for further clarification.

Examples of Reader's Notes in Translation:

External Referencing "No other incident occurred till we came to a palm tree standing by itself in an open place" (S.T). Ghalib writes in his translation: "In a place called Wasit, but there are two places with that name." Reader's note: See the Geographical Dictionary of the Saudi Lands (North of the Kingdom) by Sheikh Hamad Al-Jasser, p. 1363 (p.134).

"The history of the Ibn Rashid family" (S.T). Reader's note : See Amin Al Rayhani's book : Modern History of Najd and its annexes. Beirut 1928 (p.230).

It is known that Muhammad has a daughter (Noura) who married Hamouda Ibn Subhan of the Al Rashid family. Reader's note: See the Manual of Genealogy and Chronology for the History of Islam by the orientalist Zambaur (p.262; p.366).

Self Referencing - "As he recited it the rest of the Arabs chimed in, repeating always the last word of the line with the rhyming syllable; it had a good effect" (S.T). In fact, the beautiful atmosphere of the desert and its evenings cannot be complete without the wonderful Bedouin poetry. Reader's note: See our valuable book, "Customs of the Rwala Arabs in the Valleys of the Levant and the Peninsula" (p.135).

"It appears that Ibn Debaa (hyæna), the Sheykh..." (S.T). The name is not mentioned in Musil's book Arabia Deserta, in which he listed in detail the clans of the Rwala of Dhna Muslim, their divisions and clans, according to Nawaf Ibn Sheikh Al-Nouri Al-Shaalan. Reader's note: Either the author

made a mistake in the wording or she made it deliberately so that their news would not reach Sheikh Sattam Al-Shaalan (p.143).

“Sotamm was killed, a report we were sorry to hear” (S.T). This is not at all true, for Blunt later tells us that Sottam would almost have been killed if he had not been saved by his swift horse. Reader’s note: See the details of the incident in Chapter 10. p. 271.

"Beneyeh ibn Heneyfi ibn Shaalan is the Sheykh of a large section of the Roala (S.T). Reader’s note: See our book: “Customs of the Rwala Arabs”. Reader’s note: Chapter Three: The Structure of Society, Section: The Family and the People, and Section: Continuing News on the Rwala Sheikhs (p.190).

The British were then the enemies of the Al Saoud. Reader’s note: See translator book’s "A Journey from Kuwait to Riyadh" (p.257).

“A battle was fought between the Roala and the Welled Ali, and Sotamm has been worsted” (S.T). Reader’s note: See translator book’s “Customs of the Rwala Arabs,” chapter: Wars between the Rwala and Banu Wahb (p.171).

The full moon heralds good fortune and salvation from danger. This is why the Bedouins address the crescent moon at its first appearance. Reader’s note: See translator’s book: "The Customs and Character of the Rwala Arabs in the Levant and Jazira Valleys" (p.322).

This young girl, known as Al-Ammariyah, is either the daughter of the sheikh or the most beautiful woman in the tribe. Her mission is to awaken the chivalry of the young men of the tribe for combat. Reader’s note: See translator’s book: "Customs of the Rwala Arabs" (p.329).

2.4.6. Scholarly Notes: Asserting Authority Through Academic Framing

A scholarly note is a footnote that provides highly specialized, often contextual, additional information. Its purpose is to clarify a passage by providing information not directly integrated into the main body of the text. It helps elucidate concepts, terms, or references that may be obscure to the

reader. In translations of ancient texts, scholarly notes are often used to explain translation choices or to shed light on cultural and linguistic aspects of the original text. As both serve to provide additional context, scholarly notes may overlap with explanatory notes with the exception that the latter may be more specialized citing academic references. However, in many cases a scholarly note can be also an explanatory note. Due to this intersection, no examples are cited here as they already appear in the explanatory notes part.

2.4.7. Translation Notes as Agents of Interpretation

A translation note provides information about a specific translation choice or retains a term from the original language in the footnotes for accuracy, comparison, or explanation. This type of note is often used when:

A translation note provides information about a specific translation choice. Not to be confused with the translator's note. It may be a word or passage translated in the target text that the translator retains as a note in the language of the source text. This type of note is often used when a word or passage in the source text is preserved in the target text (e.g., un-translated terms for cultural or technical reasons). A word or passage in a language other than the source language appears and needs clarification. A retranslation into the original language is necessary to clarify meaning or restore the intended nuance.

Examples of Translation Notes :

“HQΠ” (S.t). Translation Note: Despite their resemblance, these letters have absolutely no connection with Greek. Rather, they are an ancient northern Arabic script, likely Safaitic or Thamudic (p.177)

“Al-Mu‘allaqāt” (S.T).

Translation Note: The term المعلقات (Al-Mu‘allaqāt) refers to a pre-Islamic collection of odes by renowned Arab poets, traditionally believed to have been hung on the walls of the Kaaba in Mecca.

Discussion

The reception and interpretation of translated texts, particularly culturally sensitive ones, are significantly shaped by paratextual elements. This is evident in the analyzed text, “A Pilgrimage to Nejd”, where Ibesch’s translation “A Journey to Nejd” strategically employs titles, footnotes, cover designs, and illustrations to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps between the source and target audiences. These mediation strategies align with Genette’s (1987) conceptualization of paratext as a threshold that facilitates meaning-making beyond the text itself.

One of the most significant findings in this analysis concerns the translator’s decision to alter the title and subtitle. The shift from A “Pilgrimage to Nejd” to “A Journey to Nejd” reflects a deliberate effort to remove religious connotations, ensuring that the book’s purpose is not misinterpreted. Similarly, the modification of “The Cradle of the Arab Race” to “The Cradle of the Arab Tribes” demonstrates an attempt to mitigate ethnographic inaccuracies. These changes illustrate how translation extends beyond linguistic fidelity to encompass cultural and contextual awareness. The translator’s interpretative choices are further reinforced through the cover design of the translated version. Replacing the original portrait of Lady Anne Blunt with an image of her husband, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, alongside an Arabian horse, redirects the reader’s focus from individual identity to themes of exploration and equestrian culture. This decision reflects regional perspectives on representation and subtly reconfigures the book’s visual rhetoric.

Additional layers of mediation are embedded in the illustrations and footnotes, which serve to clarify cultural references and correct historical inaccuracies in the original text. The inclusion of translator’s notes addresses discrepancies in geographic, social, and linguistic details, ensuring a more accurate portrayal of Arabian society for the target audience. However, the use of paratextual elements remains a subject of scholarly debate. While some argue that excessive annotation disrupts the reading experience, Ibesch demonstrates that well-calibrated footnotes can

enhance comprehension without overwhelming the reader. The different types of footnotes—ranging from translator’s notes to encyclopedic and commentary notes—function as meta-discursive tools, guiding the audience through the complexities of the text while preserving the integrity of the source material.

The analysis of clothing terminology within the translation further underscores the intricate relationship between material culture and textual representation. By explicating traditional Arab garments such as the *turban*, *taylasan*, and *burnous*, the translator provides socio-historical context that helps non-Arab readers situate themselves within the narrative. This intervention reinforces the idea that translation is an act of cultural negotiation, requiring a balance between fidelity to the source and accessibility for the target audience.

Ultimately, this discussion highlights that paratext is not merely decorative but a dynamic mediator in meaning construction. The translator’s engagement with paratextual elements in “A Pilgrimage to Nejd” illustrates how a work can be re-contextualized to enhance readership. This case study reaffirms the broader significance of paratext in translation studies, demonstrating that textual meaning is not static but is shaped by the interplay of linguistic, visual, and contextual factors.

Implications of the Study

Significant implications can be extracted from the findings of this study for both translation studies and cross-cultural communication. The changes that Ibesch’s translation brought about in the title, footnotes, and cover illustration—demonstrate how translation transcends textual fidelity to become a site of cultural negotiation and ideological reframing. This study can hold important implications for Reader- Response Theory as well, particularly in the manner paratextual elements can influence the reception and interpretation of translated texts. Limitations of the Study Notwithstanding the implications this work holds for different disciplines, expanding its scope through a comparative study of multiple translations or

through incorporating reader reception analysis could offer more conclusive and generalizable findings.

Future Directions

Future research could encompass multiple translations, integrate reader reception studies, and investigate publisher influence on paratextual decisions and choices.

Conclusion

At a theoretical level, this study validates Genette's conceptualization of paratext as a dynamic threshold that impacts textual reception. It also extends Genette's theory of paratext by demonstrating how visual and textual interventions in translated Islamic travel literature reshape cultural reception and translation agency. Indeed, the rendition of "A Pilgrimage to Nejd" illustrates that it is the way paratextual elements are deployed which determines whether they function as a catalyst or an inhibitor of comprehension. Ibesch's version of "A Pilgrimage to Nejd" highlights that paratextual strategies, whether in the form of footnotes, cover illustrations, or explanatory notes, act as interpretive tools that improve accessibility, elucidate cultural nuances, and amend historical inaccuracies.

Interestingly, the findings show that translation is not simply a matter of linguistic transposition but a wider process of cultural negotiation. Through the modification of titles and subtitles, for instance, Ibesch ensures that the work does not inadvertently promote misleading connotations. The reframed cover influences the reader's initial perception of the book, while illustrations and footnotes serve as guiding mechanisms that intensify understanding.

In summary, this paper reinforces the statement that translation is not the business of words only, but that of context, framing, and interpretation. The translator's engagement with paratextual elements in "A Pilgrimage to Nejd" emphasizes the complex decisions involved in making a text resonate

with a new audience, reaffirming the crucial role of paratext in translation and communication alike.

Glossary of Key Terms

Bibliographic Note: Points to other works or sources for further reading, including references to other translations or critical studies.

Commentary Note: A translator's remark offering critical insight or ideological positioning. These notes often reflect the translator's interpretive stance or highlight contentious cultural issues within the text.

Cultural Adaptation: The process of modifying certain elements of the source text (lexical, narrative, or visual) to fit the target audience's cultural expectations or comprehension needs.

Documentary Note: Offers factual clarification or contextual background about real-life events, people, or places mentioned in the source text.

Encyclopedic Note: Provides detailed cultural, historical, or religious explanations to bridge the gap between the source and target cultures.

Explanatory Note: Helps the reader understand textual references or ambiguities without inserting interpretation—usually more neutral than commentary notes.

Glossarial Note: Defines rare or specialized terms, often drawn from religious, cultural, or technical vocabularies.

Ideological/Evaluative Note: Notes that embed a political, religious, or cultural stance—either to critique, reframe, or reinforce certain values or interpretations.

Illustrative Paratext: Visual elements that accompany a translated text, including images, maps, or cover art. These illustrations often serve symbolic, descriptive, or promotional functions, and may guide the reader's cultural framing of the narrative.

Linguistic Note: Clarifies language-specific issues such as idioms, grammar, or untranslatable expressions.

Paratext: As defined by Gérard Genette (1997), paratext refers to the textual and visual elements that accompany a primary text—such as prefaces, introductions, titles, illustrations, and footnotes—which shape the way a reader accesses and interprets the main narrative.

Paratextual Framing: The deliberate use of paratextual features (titles, notes, visuals, introductions) to shape the reader's interpretation or perception of a text. This strategy can highlight ideology, politics, or cultural specificity.

Retranslation: The act of translating a text that has already been translated into the target language. Retranslations often reflect new ideological, cultural, or linguistic priorities and may correct, adapt, or challenge earlier versions.

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