

Possible Worlds in Translation: Coleman Barks's Rendition of a Story from Rumi's *Masnavi*

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This article applies the theory of possible worlds to the field of translation studies by examining the narrative worlds of original and translated texts. Specifically, Marie-Laure Ryan's characterization of possible worlds provides an account of the internal structure of the textual universe and the progression of the plot. Based on this account, one of the stories from Rumi's Masnavi is compared to Coleman Barks's English translation. The possible worlds of the characters and the unfolding of the plots in both texts are examined to assess the degree of compatibility between the textual universes of the original and the translated texts and how significant this might be. It also examines how readers reconstruct the narrative worlds projected by the two texts. The analysis reveals some inconsistencies in the way the textual universes of the original and translated texts are furnished and in the way readers reconstruct the narrative worlds of the two texts. The inability of translation to fully render the main character results in some loss in terms of the pungency and pithiness of the original text. It is also shown that the source text presents a richer domain of the virtual in comparison, suggesting a higher degree of tellability in the textual universe of the Masnavi's narrative.

Keywords: translation studies / Persian poetry / Jalal al-din Rumi: *Masnavi* / English translation / possible worlds theory / textual universe / narrative world / plot / tellability

Introduction

This study is an attempt to investigate the applicability of possible worlds theory to the field of translation studies. As far as the researchers know, it is among the first attempts to apply this theory to translation and maybe the first to apply it to the comprehensive analysis of translated texts. Possible worlds theory is placed among post-classical,

or rather cognitive approaches to narratology (Nünning 243–244). Instead of underlying structures and functions of narratives or issues related to text analysis, cognitive approaches to narratology deal with the workings of mind and the mental processes through which narratives are specified and evoked (Fludernik and Olson 5; Risku 4). In fact, the application of cognitive linguistics in translation studies, first termed by Munoz as “cognitive translatology” (Munoz Martin 169), has been the demanding focus of research in recent years and many translation studies have indeed been carried out in areas such as mental imagery, iconicity, and conceptual metaphor (see Rojo and Ibarretxe-Antunano; Tabakowska; Sharifian; Halverson). However, there are many areas not yet investigated. In their book *Cognitive Linguistics and Translation*, Rojo and Ibarretxe-Antunano raise some basic and general questions which they consider crucial for a future framework of cognitive translation studies. One of these questions—which they believe researchers should bear in mind and expand in future studies—is: “Are there any other unexplored (or scarcely explored) areas in translation theory in which cognitive linguistics can make a contribution?” (Rojo and Ibarretxe-Antunano 14) This study is a response to this call. With regard to translation research, possible worlds theory (henceforth PWT) is an unexplored area which can make a contribution toward defining and rethinking the act of translation in general and literary translation in particular. A major aspect of literary interpretation is the cognitive representation of the ‘world’ projected by the text, i.e., “the sets of states of affairs, events and relationships that the text refers to” (Semino, “Possible Worlds” 83). In other words, texts are comprehended when the reader reconstructs sufficiently the text worlds imagined by the author in text production. All the same, the translator of literary texts must comprehend the overall world projected by the literary text and try to reproduce the same world in his or her translation.

Jalal al-din Mohammad Balkhi, Rumi or Mawlana is a celebrated thirteen-century Persian mystic and poet, who is regarded by many as “the greatest of all mystics”, “the greatest sufi poet”, or “the world’s greatest mystic poet” (Field 452; Schimmel; F. Lewis, *Rumi: Past xi*). His *Masnavi*, which is the focus of this research, is considered as one of the greatest works of poetry as well as the most significant work of mysticism in Persian language. So far, many translators have rendered Rumi’s verse into English such as A. J. Arberry, William Chittick, Reynold Nicholson and Jawid Mojaddedi. But it is Coleman Barks whose rendering has captured the imagination of American public so far that Rumi is now a “best-selling poet in America” (F. Lewis, *Rumi*:

Swallowing 527). Previously, the possible world approach has been adopted by some literary scholars to the study of the text worlds of some specific texts (see Semino, “Possible Worlds”; Doležel; Stockwell; Eco). In this study, one of the original Persian narratives of *Masnavi* is analyzed and compared with its English translation by Coleman Barks to see to what extent the possible worlds of the source text of *Masnavi* and the target text of Barks’s translation correspond.

Possible Worlds

Possible worlds theory is traceable back to the German philosopher Gottfried Leibnitz. He maintained that among the infinite possible worlds, God has chosen and created the most perfect of them, and the world we live in, i.e., the actual world, is the best of possible worlds (Leibnitz 67, 229). In modern times, the concept of possible worlds has been paid attention to in terms of the functions it has in semantics of modal logic and philosophy of language. Philosophers from the analytic school like Kripke considered how viable this concept is in explaining the modal concepts such as probability, necessity, and possibility. The possible worlds of philosophy were generally made and used as a tool to create the conditions under which logical operations were performed (see Palmer; Rescher; D. Lewis). Later, narratologists such as Ryan, Pavel, and Doležel applied the explanatory power of PWT to the study of literature and narrativity to account for the truth value of literary expressions and the link between the actual world and fictional worlds. By and large, these possible worlds theorists assume an actual world for each text in which statements are given a truth-value, which may not be true outside the text. In her influential work, *Possible Worlds*, Ryan provides a characterization of fictionality, explaining how fictional texts project worlds that are considered as substitutes for the actual world. These textual worlds relate to the actual world through ‘accessibility relations’ and are primarily formed through the act of ‘re-centering.’ According to Ryan,

through their act of make-believe, readers, spectators, or players transport themselves in imagination from the world they regard as actual towards an alternative possible world—a virtual reality—which they regard as actual for the duration of their involvement in the text, game, or spectacle. I call this projection into a virtual body an imaginative recentering. (Ryan, “Fictional” 251)

At the time of reading a work of fiction, the world of reference is shifted temporarily from the actual world (henceforth AW) to the actual world of the text or textual actual world (henceforth TAW). Nonetheless, the world that a fictional text projects is not limited to TAW; there is also a virtual aspect to that. Ryan considers the overall world projected by a text as a *textual universe*, where an actual world in center (TAW) is surrounded by alternative possible worlds (henceforth APWs) which are created by the mental act of the characters. Since different mental processes could be involved in creating them, a variety of alternative possible worlds could be identified. Ryan classifies the private worlds of characters into five main types:

1. Knowledge World (K-world): what the character knows or believes to be true about TAW;
2. Obligation World (O-world): what the character feels obliged to do (or not to do) based on his or her moral principles or the existing social rules in TAW;
3. Wish World (W-World): what the character wishes or desires to be or to happen in TAW;
4. Intention World (I-World): what the character is intent on; or what the character plans to do to achieve his or her goal or to make changes in TAW;
5. Fantasy Universe (F-Universe): what the character fantasizes or dreams about. It also includes the fictions told by the characters themselves. (Ryan, *Possible* 111–119)

Within the textual universe, there is a dynamic relation among the worlds. The private worlds of the characters interact with each other and with TAW. These interactions give rise to conflicts. Some sort of a conflict is needed for a story to get started and for a plot to be developed. Based on different types of interactions, a variety of conflicts could occur. In Ryan's words, "the relations among the worlds of a narrative system are not static, but change from state to state. The plot is the trace left by the movement of these worlds within the textual universe" (Ryan, *Possible* 119). Nevertheless, TAW is not just limited to the already actualized facts; it also contains a set of general laws and rules that determine "the range of possible future developments of the plot out of the present situation" (113–114). They simply determine, based on the current state of the plot, what events could happen hereafter and what events could not. As such, this actualizable domain is itself a possible world which through temporal accessibility is linked to the current state of affairs of TAW. It is different from other personal

worlds of the system in that its mode of existence is absolute, instead of being created virtually in the minds of the characters. Again, the plot of the narrative is not limited to those events and states that are realized in the TAW. As the narrative progresses, different lines of plot could be developed in the mind of the reader but only one of them is realized in the main plot of the narrative as TAW. Ryan claims that the complexity of the plot causes continuous changes of text worlds, which in turn, make the narrative “tellable” (150). Tellability refers to features that are conducive to the noteworthiness of a narrative, which, as Ryan argues, is achieved not only by the changes in text actual world but also via “the richness of the domain of the virtual within the system of worlds projected by a text, namely the presence of a variety of private sub-worlds which remain unrealized” (qtd. in Semino, “Text Worlds” 52). In this sense, Ryan puts forth her ‘principle of diversification’: “seek the diversification of possible worlds within the narrative universe.” (Ryan, *Possible* 156) This diversification confers aesthetic value on the world of the narrative and is dependent on a set of embedded narrative as “story-like constructs contained in the private worlds of the characters” (156). The recognition of these embedded narratives within the textual universe is a prerequisite for the full reconstruction of the narrative world of a literary text, without which many important aspects of comprehension such as the intent of the author, deeper layers of the worlds, and the overall meaning of the narrative do not obtain. Since *Masnavi* presents Rumi’s teachings through narratives, the understanding of these underlying elements plays a significant role in the comprehension of the original narratives and in providing a sound interpretation of these narratives in the translated texts.

Rumi’s *Masnavi*

Rumi’s *Masnavi* is a comprehensive work of mysticism in which almost all the fundamental principles of mysticism and Islamic Sufism from love and quest to the very final stages of mystical perfection and union with the divine are presented to the mystical followers against a backdrop of Islamic teachings and Quranic verses. By covering both theoretical and practical aspects Rumi aspired to teach and guide his disciples in their mystical journey. *Masnavi* is a collection of narratives composed in six volumes. In each narrative, a story is narrated together with Rumi’s comments as well as his mystical teachings and philosophical reflections. Rumi narrates from an omniscient point of

view. In addition to determining the setting and identifying the characters and their properties, the omniscient narrator can penetrate into the minds of the characters and express their inner thoughts and desires, while at the same time is able to express statements of his or her own in three forms of 'generalization,' 'judgment' and 'interpretation' (Chatman 228; Rimmon-Kenan 98–100). Stories in *Masnavi* are of different types, ranging from religious, Islamic and mystical stories, to allegorical and parabolic ones as well as tales of everyday life and even tales of vulgar content. Nevertheless, Rumi's narratives are not limited to the stories; they include non-fictional elements as well. Doležel divides texts to world-constructing texts (C-texts) and world-imagining texts (I-texts) (Doležel 24). Fictional texts are of the former type. They create worlds which have their own system of reality (TAW). I-texts, however, represent the actual world. Rumi's narratives incorporate the elements of both I-text and C-text. His imaging digressions are embedded within the stories but reflect opinions about AW. One could argue that such way of narrativization forms a 'structural parallelism,' including the fictional part and the non-fictional part, both proceeding along two parallel lines, where the nonfictional part refers to AW while the fictional part has its own world of reference in TAW (42). These two sections together make the semantic domain of the narratives, while it is just the fictional parts of the narrative which have the ability of constructing a world. This narrativization is characteristic of didactic genres. The teachings of didactic texts, as Ryan asserts "are interpretations of the facts of TAW whose potential field of applicability includes both AW and TAW" (Ryan, *Possible* 83). The dual-world structure of Rumi's narratives indicates that the speaker of non-fictional parts has to be different from the speaker of fictional parts. Since the reference world of the non-fictional parts is AW, the speaker of these parts of narrative is the actual author or Rumi himself. But since in the fictional text a world is created as the result of the act of recentering, the actual author has to relocate himself or herself in TAW and trade his or her identity for a substitute speaker so as to fulfil the felicity condition of the fictional communication. A substitute hearer is also postulated because every communication presupposes an addressee (66). Therefore, the fictional communication in Rumi's narrative involves two distinct transactions: between actual author and actual hearer in AW, and between substitute speaker and substitute hearer in TAW. Throughout Rumi's narratives, the ontological boundaries between AW and TAW as well as illocutionary boundaries between the actual author and substitute speaker are frequently crossed. Ryan calls this ability of fictions

to allow the speaker to step in and out of the TAW as “the recursivity of the fictional relocation” (272).

Analysis

In Ryan’s characterization of possible worlds, the overall world projected by a text is considered as a complete universe comprising the actual world and the alternative possible worlds of the characters. Ryan’s model is used in this study to discuss the narrative world projected by an original Persian literary text in comparison with its English translation by Coleman Barks. According to Semino, “a possible-world approach is particularly useful in describing the internal structure of the textual universe, and in accounting for the development of the plot” (Semino, “Possible Worlds” 86–87). As such, the textual universes, including the TAW and the APWs, of both the source text (henceforth ST) and the target text (henceforth TT) are described and discussed. Moreover, the realized as well as unrealized developments of the plot in both texts are compared and analyzed to determine the degree of compatibility between the ST of *Masnavi*’s narrative and the TT of Coleman Barks’s translation in terms of the construction of narrative worlds. The original story is from *Masnavi*, Vol. 5 (lines 2163–2227), entitled “dar bayan e kasi key sokhani guyad ... (*explaining the case of a person ...*)”, which is translated in Barks’s *Rumi: the book of love* as “two ways of running” (83).

In order to better analyze and compare the narrative universes of the original and translated texts, it is necessary, first, to have a general description of the main characters, events and the conflicts that happen at the primary level of the story as depicted in the plot-functional parts of the original narrative. Regarding this, a summary of the story is provided together with a general outline of the conflicts that form the main plot. Then, based on such description, the deeper layers of the semantic universes of both the ST and the TT are analyzed in detail so as to determine the degree of resemblance and instances of incompatibility between the projected worlds of the two texts.

Reynold A. Nicholson’s faithful translation of *Masnavi* has been used to help make the following summary of the original story: an ascetic had a jealous wife and a beautiful maid. The wife did not trust her husband and never let the Husband be alone with the maid. One day the wife and the maid went to public bath. The Wife noticed that the wash-basin was left at home. So, she asked the maid to go home

and fetch the basin. Upon hearing this, the maid came to life because she knew that now she would obtain a meeting with the master after six years of longing to find him alone. She ran joyously to the house. Desire took possession of both the lovers so that they had no care of bolting the door. Then suddenly the wife recollected, ‘what have I done? why did I send her home?’ and ran with anxiety to the house. She reached the door and opened it. The sound of the door fell in the ears of the two lovers. The maid jumped up in consternation and the ascetic, to cover the tracks, stood up and began to say his prayers in disarray. The wife, now inside the house, was made suspicious by all that agitation. She approached her husband and examined him and realized what they had been up to. The wife slapped the Husband on the head, “is this the body of a man of prayer?”; “is such a foul and filthy body worthy of prayer and supplication?”; “is such a register of foul and wicked actions worthy of redemption and salvation?” (see Nicholson 1865–1871).

The narratives in *Masnavi* are usually exempla, anecdote-like of short narratives used to point a moral or to sustain an argument. As stories, then, they are very sketchy, lacking or minimally possessing the features of short stories such as characterization, establishing of a certain mood or focus on a seminal event. Nonetheless, they also partake of conflicts. As Ryan asserts, the most frequent conflicts of the primary level involve the W-world of a character and TAW (Ryan, *Possible* 121). This is just the case here. The story begins with a conflict in the W-world of the Wife and the current states of affairs in TAW, as the wife would not like, out of jealousy, the Maid to approach her husband. The Wife’s intense jealousy causes her W-world to develop into an I-world, as she has the intention of not leaving them alone, ever. As the story goes by, it is revealed that both the Maid and the Husband also have their own joint W-world which is in conflict with the W-world of the Wife. Nevertheless, a change in the state of affairs of TAW, which Rumi ascribes to the predetermination of God, prepares the ground for the frustration of the W-world of the Wife while at the same time contributing to the fulfillment of the joint W-worlds of the Maid and the Husband. Rumi comments in AW that the event to come is the fore-ordination by God, against which reason cannot do anything. It happens that the Wife and the Maid are at the public bath and the Wife, unawares, asks the Maid to fetch the basin from home. This ignites a revitalized W-world in the Maid, and she tries to grab the opportunity. The joint W-worlds of the Maid and the Husband are fulfilled when they finally meet at home. The Wife, who has helped the situation against herself with her inadvertent negligence, runs agitatedly, out of

the feared state of her W-world, towards home. Here Rumi again steps out of the story and, by making use of a comparison between the different manners that the Maid and the Wife run towards home, begins to expound rather extensively two important mystical concepts of fear and love. Rumi takes the floor in TAW again and goes on narrating the story. The Wife rushes into the house and the Husband and the Maid, in a state of consternation caused by the new changes in TAW, project an O-world so as to look innocent. The Husband begins to say his prayer which denotes the mock beliefs and mock obligations of his pretended O-world. Despite this, the wife gets suspicious and upon examining her husband discovers their secret. This causes a dysphoric situation for the Husband and the Maid as their joint W-worlds is put in conflict with TAW. The Wife slaps her husband and scolds him for his false O-world. Then Rumi comments on the accounting of human deeds on the Day of Judgment and concludes this narrative to begin a new one on the subject of true penitence.

This is a general description of the textual universe of the ST. In the translation, the main events of the original narrative are somehow reproduced. But despite that, there are instances of incompatibility in the possible worlds of the TT and in the way the narrative world is reconstructed in Barks's translation. Below, we will discuss these incompatibilities.

The original narrative is composed of an extensive title and 65 rhymed couplets, 24 of which are fictional elements conducive to the advancement of the plot. The remaining 41 couplets are nonfictional elements which have no plot-functional role but 'flesh out' the world projected by the fictional parts. Thus, the title and the nonfictional elements of the narrative play a significant role in the way the textual universe of the original narrative is furnished. The title of the original narrative is quoted below in full:

Explaining the case of a person who makes a statement when his behavior is not consistent with that statement and profession, like the infidels (of whom God hath said): "and if thou ask them who created the heavens and the earth they will surely say, 'Allah.'" How is the worship of a stone idol and the sacrifice of life and wealth for its sake appropriate to a soul which knows that the creator of heaven and earth and (all) created beings is a god, all-hearing, all-seeing, omnipresent, all-observing, all dominating, jealous, etc.? (Nicholson 1865)

In *Masnavi*, different narratives are separated from each other by titles of varying length. As instances of metatexts, they are 'gates' to the world

of the narratives, even though the inferential domain for them is AW. Shamisa considers *Masnavi*'s titles as anti-fictional elements that serve as a brief summary of the narratives and tend to reveal, in part, the plot of their story (Shamisa 142). Moreover, these titles serve important purposes too. They express the main point and the primary focus of the narratives, hence enlightening the reader and preventing ambiguity or miscomprehension. As for this narrative, the reader learns from the title that the main character of the story is a hypocritical ascetic, given to worldly desires, whose words and deeds are not consistent.

In Barks's translation, there is no such emphasis on the character of the Ascetic and the whole of the original title has been replaced by an improvised title as "two ways of running" (Barks 83), which in a sense puts emphasis on the characters of the Wife and the Maid instead of the Ascetic. What is more, in the translation the character of the Ascetic has been reproduced as 'a certain man,' which has been deprived of all its cultural significance. As such, the two characters in ST and TT are quite different; the one represented in the TT does not have the complexity it has in the ST. This suggests that the personal worlds of the two characters are also different, which, in turn, has significant consequences on the construction of the narrative worlds of ST and TT and influences the way the readers comprehend and interpret the events and the plot of the two texts. In fact, Rumi has composed this narrative to depict the psychological states of an insincere ascetic whose words and acts are inconsistent. Accordingly, the major focus of the story is around the conflict within the K-world of the Ascetic on one hand and the conflict between his O-world and W-world on the other. These conflicts justify the dysphoric state he is faced at the end of the story. In other words, the full comprehension and adequate interpretation of the events of the story depends on the recognition of the conflicts that exist in the possible worlds of the Ascetic. But, in the TT, this character does not have the complexity it has in the ST and the conflicts between his private worlds, which indicate deeper layers of psychological states, are not equally recreated in the translated text. Instead, it seems that the major conflict of the story, as the title of the translation also suggests, is between the W-worlds of the Wife and the Maid. In the TT, it is the conflict between the husband's W-world and the states of affairs in TAW which causes his plight, whereas in the original story it is the violation of the O-world of the Ascetic—to which his W-world runs counter—as well as the gaps/defects in his K-world that result in his disgrace. Conflicts within a private world refer to the possible worlds of a character that "cannot be realized because of internal inconsistency"

(Ryan, *Possible* 122). There is internal inconsistency within the K-world of the Ascetic. He supposedly believes that what is important is the hereafter, and that God is Omnipresent knowing and seeing everything; but in reality what he follows is the pursuit of the world and its pleasures. Again, the state of affairs shows that his knowledge of the world is incomplete. He believes that by observing the rules and doing outward acts of piety he can achieve redemption while what brings final salvation is the love of truth and following the mystical path. His W-worlds are also incompatible because as an ascetic he is expected to be a God-fearing man but he follows his desires and has no fear of sinning.

The concluding parts of the original narrative, including Rumi's teachings about the hereafter and the issue of penitence, have been eliminated in Barks's translation. In order to put an end to the seemingly protracted original narrative, Barks has manipulated the narrative and used an evaluative proposition of his own as the conclusion for the story. It reads thus: "people who repress desires often turn, suddenly, into hypocrites" (Barks 85).

This authorial intrusion of the translator affects the reconstruction of the narrative world, suggesting that what made a hypocrite out of the Ascetic was the suppression of his W-world. In the ST, however, the very existence of such W-world in a seemingly self-denying man is given as the reason for his hypocrisy. In fact, Rumi puts forth the issue of hypocrisy right at the beginning of the story where, in the title, he introduces a man who is supposed to be abstentious while the story reveals that his claims are false.

As we mentioned before, the non-fictional elements of a text could flesh out the textual universe, and that the TAW is not limited just to the actualized facts. Rumi's discussion on penitence at the end of the original narrative could represent a possible world, as the possible future development of the plot, where the story goes on and the Ascetic becomes aware of his miscomprehended beliefs and wrong acts. He would try to take the mystical path and to begin anew; he would repent of his sins and try to nurture the love of God in his heart. In the translation, however, the last line of the translated text would repudiate such a possible development of the plot. In effect, Rumi's main purpose of composing the original narratives is to present, exemplify and drive home his mystical teachings. As such, these narratives have a clear rhetorical function. His intent is for the readers to reconstruct the world of the stories on the basis of his own reflections. All the same, the different endings of the original and translated narratives suggest significant differences in the comprehension and interpretation of the two texts.

In Rumi's narrative the distinction between fictional and non-fictional sections are marked. The fictional sections are narrated in the past tense, whereas the nonfictional sections are told using the present tense. This contributes to the easy recognition of the ontological boundary crossing that occurs recursively in Rumi's narration and determines which parts have AW as their world of reference and in which sections the referential domain is TAW. Such boundary crossings from TAW to AW provide moments of pausing for the reader to reflect on the story and on Rumi's comments. One of the functions of Rumi's authorial digressions is that they act like the pauses in the verisimilitude of the narrative and provide the chance for the reader to reflect upon the message and the mystical interpretation of the story. On the other hand, they present a certain amount of information about the possible worlds of the characters and the overall world projected by the narrative. Rumi steps out of the story to provide his comments and insights. For example, he interjects to comment that the Wife's negligence to send the Maid home is attributed to the decree of God and asserts that there is no place for reason when pre-ordinance comes. In the TT, this authorial digression has been omitted, suggesting that the cause of the main event of the story is sheer chance. Among all the authorial digressions of the original text, only Rumi's discussion about the difference between love and fear has been transferred in the translation. The elimination of the original digressions has consequences on the reconstruction of the narrative world of the translation. Indeed, since the narrative world of the ST is furnished with a higher amount of nonfictional information, it is, in comparison to the narrative world of the TT, more "tellable." We mentioned earlier that the tellability of a narrative world is achieved through the richness of the virtual domain within the textual universe. This richness depends on the diversification of the possible worlds which remain unrealized. In the ST, the W-world of the Wife is not fulfilled, contrary to that of the Maid, because her K-world is in conflict with the TAW. The Wife relies on her reason to achieve her W-world and does not realize that every change in the states of affairs is the result of God's plan and decree but the Maid's W-world is fulfilled because she simply cares for love, nothing more. She is not, like the Wife, in a fearful state. In a sense, this is pertinent to the case of the Ascetic as well. He also relies on reason. Devoid of love, the prospective extension of his K-world causes him to expect that he would go to heaven for observing the formal requirements of piety. However, what he encounters in the end is a real plight revealing his hypocrisy and insincerity. In the TT, the distinction between love and fear in the

W-worlds of the Wife and the Maid has been recreated; however, the extension of the Ascetic's K-world would not be furnished since the narrative world takes priority over the W-worlds of the characters.

One of the main narrative strategies of Rumi in *Masnavi* is story-within-story or embedded narratives. The narrative we analyzed is linked to its preceding and following narratives. As paratexts, these two narratives offer important information concerning the main points and the primary focus of the main narrative. In practice, one of the most significant aspects of tellability is, according to Ryan, the narrative point of the story (Ryan, *Possible* 150). Each story must have a point to make it tellable. In didactic stories the main point is to convey an ethical or educational message. In our case, the main point of the ST is to describe the psychological states and the inner life of an ascetic who assumes that he could reach truth through reason and rules without adopting the mystical path of love and true devotion. He is disgraced in the end and his insincerity is disclosed. In the TT, the narrative point is not recreated and the hypocrisy of the man is introduced to be the result of the suppression of his desires. Barks's translation reflects a very easy-going, modern, attitude towards the issue of desires, implying that desires should not be repressed whereas Rumi considers the gratification of desires as a sin which blocks the way of the mystic towards his true love, *i.e.*, God.

Conclusion

The unique nature of fictional texts in general and *Masnavi's* narratives in particular entails that, from a certain cognitive perspective, the adequate interpretation of such narratives depends on the comprehension of the possible worlds of the characters and the reconstruction of the overall world projected by these texts. PWT provides an overall account of the narrative world of a whole literary text. Instead of focusing on stylistic features and linguistic choices, a possible world approach aims for examining the mental functioning of the fictional characters and the way the readers comprehend literary texts. With regard to translation studies, possible worlds theory is an unexplored area which can make a worthy contribution toward rethinking the act of translation. It could enrich our understanding of the works of translation and could open new avenues to the analysis and evaluation of some controversial yet popular translations such as Barks's translation of Rumi's poetry. Ryan's characterization of PWT is especially

useful in describing the internal structure of the textual universe. It also provides a good account of the development of the plot. We adopted Ryan's model of possible worlds to the analysis of the narrative worlds of a pair of texts in comparison: a Persian narrative of Rumi's *Masnawi* and its English translation by Coleman Barks. Our analysis showed that the TT differs considerably from the ST in reconstructing the original narrative world. The character of the ascetic in the narrative is not reproduced equally and his personal worlds are not furnished sufficiently in the TT. The substantial elimination of the nonfictional elements of the ST has resulted in a textual universe which is not as tellable as that of the ST. The domain of the virtual in the textual universe of the TT fails to suggest some of the differing lines of plot which originate from the unrealized possible worlds of the characters. As a didactic text, the ST prioritizes the personal K-worlds over other kinds of possible worlds, whereas the TT gives priority to the W-worlds of the characters. The main character of the ST is the Ascetic, whereas the title of the TT 'two ways of running' suggests that the main character is the Wife (or both the Maid and the Wife). Some aspects of the narrative world and some contents of the worlds of the characters, especially the personal worlds of the Ascetic have not been transferred in the TT. The authorial intrusion of Barks as the conclusion of the TT gives rise to a peculiar interpretation of the message of the original narrative as if it narrated a spritely story instead of a spiritual mystical text. The case study analyzed here can demonstrate just a glimpse into the possibilities possible worlds theory could have for translation studies.

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Možni svetovi v prevodu: Barksova interpretacija zgodbe iz Rumijevega *Masnavija*

Ključne besede: literarno prevajanje / perzijska poezija / Džalaludin Rumi: *Masnavi* / prevodi v angleščino / teorija možnih svetov / besedilni svet / pripovedni svet / zaplet / narativnost

V tem članku uporabimo teorijo možnih svetov na področju prevajalskih študij pri preučevanju pripovednih svetov izvirnih in prevedenih besedil. S tem, ko opredeli možne svetove, Marie-Laure Ryan opiše notranjo strukturo besedilnega univerzuma in potek zgodbe. Na tej podlagi primerjamo eno od izvirnih zgodb Rumijevega *Masnavija* z angleškim prevodom Colemana Barksa. Možne svetove likov in zgodbo v obeh besedilih raziskujemo, da bi lahko ocenili stopnjo združljivosti med besedilnimi svetovi izvirnika in prevedenega besedila ter ugotovili, kako pomembno bi to lahko bilo. Preučujemo tudi, kako bralci rekonstruirajo pripovedni svet, ki ga projicira vsako besedilo. Analiza je pokazala nekatera razhajanja med prikazom besedilnih svetov v izvirnem in prevedenem besedilu ter v načinu, kako bralci rekonstruirajo pripovedne svetove obeh besedil. Ker prevodu ni uspelo celovito prikazati glavnega junaka, se delno izgubita tudi ostrina in konciznost, ki ju kaže izvorno besedilo. Pokazali smo še, da je v primerjavi s prevodom izvorno besedilo bogatejše na področju namišljenega, kar kaže na višjo stopnjo pripovedljivosti (»tellability«) v pripovednem svetu *Masnavija*.

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