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Narrative structure, context and translation in Paulo Coelho's *O Alquimista* in English, Arabic and Turkish

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The contentious bestsellerdom of Coelho's *O Alquimista* (published in 1988) has not only placed it endurably on top of the prestigious bestseller lists, but also made it subject to severe criticism. With copyrights sold in 80 languages, the narrative creates a unique form of communication implementing a prolonged, interactive language–culture relationship, and recreating appealingly unique narrative structures addressing readers in new contexts. This study attempts a functional semantico–semiotic reading of the narrative structures of *O Alquimista* in English, Arabic and Turkish, relating the "recreated texts" to their sociocultural "context of interpretation", and viewing them as the outcome of two *separate* acts of communication functioning successively on the same *semantic content*. The study argues that rediscoursing the narrative cross-culturally yields variant narrative structures, each constructed twice – *internally*, in the act of encoding through writing, and *externally* through the reader–text interaction in reading.

Keywords: narrative structure; narrative translation; bestseller; meta-context

1. Introduction

Addressing the global theme of attaining one's purpose in life *simplistically* has not only placed *O Alquimista* (published in 1988) on top of the prestigious bestseller lists for hundreds of weeks, it has also put it under fire by critics and scholars. With an upward trajectory of translations and sales, the narrative reached unprecedented rates of rights sold in 80 languages by 2014. The narrative was first written in Portuguese by a Brazilian writer who claims "to see the world with Brazilian eyes." *O Alquimista* and its author now form a "publishing," "social" and "cultural" phenomenon (Arias 2001; Hart 2004, 304, 311).

"Bestselling fiction," "translation" and "culture" may lead interchangeably to each other in this case. In the discourse of bestsellers, factors symbiotically function – critical and cultural values, social and economic environments, and literary aesthetics – to turn this sort of fiction into an *image* (the term is Bloom's) *designed* to satisfy *contemporary tastes* (Bloom 2008; Botting 2012). Any reading of popular fiction remains incomplete if one of the crucial elements – the world, the reader, and the text– is not considered; they "co-exist in a complex, dynamic relationship" (McCracken 1998, 2). Language remains the medium and is at the heart of this phenomenon; texts are linguistic objects communicating interpersonally with their readers (Hasan 1989; Simpson 2004; Toolan 2001).

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Language and culture entertain a prolonged, interactive relationship reflected in the language of verbal art (Butt and Lukin 2009; Halliday and Hasan 1985; Hasan 1989, 2009, [1986] 2011).

Translating these texts entails "mapping" their meanings between languages-in-contexts (Matthiessen 2001). A text is produced, a broader readership is given access, and, eventually, sales increase. Here, the other side of the coin is put on display as "[b]estsellers have two functions. The first is straightforwardly commercial: to make money. The second function is, loosely, 'ideological'… [they] *tap a specific cultural nerve* and thereby serve as exercises in the management of social anxieties" (Botting 2012, 163, italics added). It, therefore, becomes possible to conceive of an indirect relationship behind creating a narrative, the circulation of its ideology, and bestsellerdom on one hand, and the recreated narrative, the act of translation, and the socio-semiotic contextual configurations (CCs) of the reading and writing acts on the other (Figure 1). Significance provided by mechanisms of narration may impinge to a large extent on the translator's interaction with the text, particularly because such a preoccupation with attempting to appeal to "popular taste" requires an attentive rendering into the recreated narrative structures within the new contexts.

This study takes as its main concern the interaction of the translator with the narrative text and, accordingly, his/her recreation of its narrative structure against the sociocultural background of the new context, assuming, following Yaktine (2005, 2006), that the narrative structure is constructed twice: *internally*, in writing, and *externally* in reading. The study examines these relations in the copyrighted translations of *O Alquimista* in English, Arabic and Turkish, therefore, positioning its implied readers in three contexts – the Occident, the Orient and the Turk.

2. Narration and translation: communication acts within the semiotics of context

No wonder a quick survey of responses to any *narrative* reveals opposing reader views elicited by their reading experience. The concept of *narration* may be a semantic rendezvous, denoting both the process of transmitting a narrative message and a medium through which communication occurs (Rimmon-Kenan [1983] 2002). This verbal

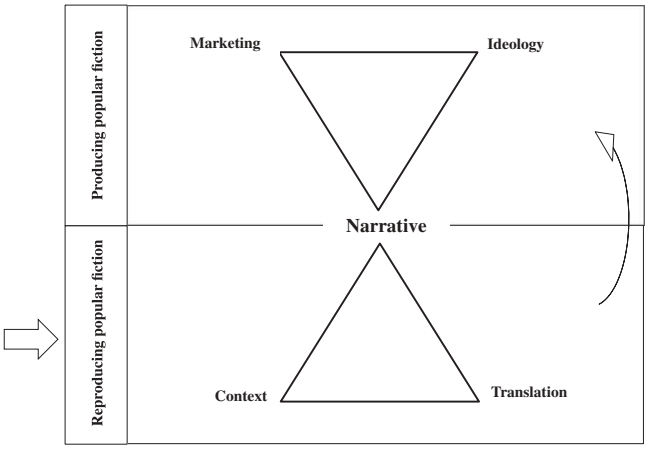

Figure 1. Bestselling narrative and influential factors in original and translation contexts.

communication involves two sorts of participants in an interaction exceeding the limits of the *emitter–message–receiver* borderline (Chatman 1978; Enkvist 1964; O'Toole 1982).

Narrating is an interactive process; so is receiving. A writer, through narration, creates a fictional world in which the narrator ushers the reader to the end of the story, where demands are made on the language to play infinite functions and to create the writer–reader relationships. In narratives, "language is not as clothing is to the body; it **is** the body." Language is central to verbal art: it is "a point of departure" for the writer and "a point of entry" for the reader. Thus, narratives as texts are *instances* of the inclusive *language system* which is a social institution loaded with cultural implications. From here, their value emerges; texts *instantiate* culture (Butt and Lukin 2009; Chatman 1978; Halliday 1988, 1996; Hasan 1989, 91, 99; O'Toole 1982; (Rimmon-Kenan [1983] 2002; Toolan 2001).

Context is pivotal for the narrative interaction. Narrative texts are processed within two successive, albeit interlocking, contexts, "a context of creation" and "a context of interpretation," in which the writer and the reader exchange roles in a dialogue of a special nature and the narrative message is *refracted* (Hasan 1989, 101–103; O'Toole 1982). The level of congruity or divergence between the reader's context of interpretation and that of the creator facilitates and/or impedes the success of their communication (Hasan [1986] 2011, 1989). Cultural variation entails variation in semiotic potential, which in turn results in different CCs of situations and multiple semantic frameworks for a text. Text contextualisation is thus significant; a situation is meaningful in reference to culture, and cultures vary in codifying their semiotics. This creates a particular area of dissonance described by Hasan as *semiotic distance* (Halliday 1988; viii–ix; Hasan [1986] 2011, 1989; O'Toole 1982, 223–225; Spencer and Gregory 1964, 60, 100–103). Verbal art is a socio-semiotic construct, and a pragmatic consideration of literature will unearth an immanent cultural content artistically encapsulated in the text of this "self-contained" cultural "institution" (Spencer and Gregory 1964, 60). Culture is, therefore, given a semiotic dimension in any stylistic study of a literary text (Halliday 1988; Halliday and Hasan 1985; O'Toole 1982).

Analogous to the system of language, the system of verbal art, as perceived by Hasan (1989), incorporates three strata ordered respectively in a bottom-up manner as *verbalisation, symbolic articulation* and *theme*. It is at the level of *verbalisation* that the two semiotic systems of language and verbal art intersect. The *deautomatised patterning of the patterns* (Halliday 1996; Hasan 1989) occupies the area of *symbolic articulation*. These patterns are accumulated in a process of *motivated selection* to further promote meanings through the socio–textual interaction at the level of *theme*. Thus, an in-depth stylistic reading process allows the reader access to the ultimate level of meaning of a text while ascending through levels *accessed* and *manifested* by one another (Butt 1988; Butt and Lukin 2009; Hasan 1989).

Translation creates the communicative, interactive environment essential for the transportability of literature. It is a semiotic rather than a mere linguistic process, conducted on several layers of sign–language–culture interaction; translated literature is thus a semiotically transposed human product. The processes of reading and rewriting occur in a special meta-context with contextual variables peculiar to each act of translation. The translator is thus expected to belong to an environment that unconsciously shapes and crucially influences his/her linguistic habits and modes of textual interpretation; the careful reading of the source language text is unquestionably mirrored in his/her choices (Baker 2000, 258–259; Bassnett 2002; Chatman 1978; Dusi 2000; Malmkjær 2004, 16, 22; Matthiessen 2001, 111–113; Muhawi 2000; Petrilli 1992; Sontag 2007).

And as translators (writers) as well as their readers get immersed in an interactive dialogue surmounting the borders of the "seemingly disjunctive cultural and linguistic entities" (Wilson 2007), this interaction forms the reader's first experience with the text, and an engagement with what seems for him/her to be a dialogue with the *original* author.

Translating involves a complex process of *refraction* in a *mediated* interlingual, intercultural communicative transposition (Malmkjær 2004; Reiss [1971] 2000). The translator is proposed to belong to "a special category of communicator" in a "secondary communication" that is "conditioned by another, previous act" (Hatim and Mason 1997, 2). Linkage and separateness are simultaneously upheld for this communicative act in relation to the previous one, while inferiority and subservience are by no means ratified (Bassnett 2002; Hatim and Mason 1997; Nelson and Wilson 2013). Bassnett (2002) highlights the pragmatic role of translation, and outlines the author/translator/reader relationship in the two "separate but linked chains" of Author–Text–Receiver = Translator–Text–Receiver (45). Hatim and Mason (1997) explicate the pseudo-contrariety of the two complementary features (namely linkage and separateness), stressing that the translator "works on the verbal *record* of an act of communication … and seeks to *relay* perceived *meaning values* ["across cultural and linguistic boundaries"] to a (group of) target language receiver(s) as *a separate act* of communication" (vii, 1, italics added).

3. Narrative structure: an overview

In order to demarcate the direction in which we are going in our investigation of the *narrative structure*, we need to call upon a sound delineation of the term along narratological, poetic, semiotic and related lines. Despite the broadness of its scope, "narrative structure" represents only one aspect of the narrative *text* in its interactive sense; the others include both intertextual interactions of the narrative with other texts, and contextual interactions with sociological and sociosemitic values (Yaktine 2006).

A cursory look at the *Dictionary of Narratology* (Prince 2003) reveals that the *narrative structure* is not allocated an entry; rather, the term is presented as an example of a structural unity created by the ensemble of compositional networks under the entry "*structure"* (95). A structuralist–semiotic shade is thus overlain, disregarding both the functionality of these networks in creating the totality of the text in context and the possibility of having the narrative structured and restructured through writing and reading, respectively. Overcoming such a segregation, Hasan affirms that text structure is governed by two agencies – genre and context – and that the "structure" forms *the link* between the internal texture and external context hence creating a higher-order semantic unity (Butt 1988; Halliday and Hasan 1985; Hasan 1989).

O'Toole (1982) and Yaktine (2005, 2006) correspondingly, yet antithetically, pertinently relate the internal with the external in their designations of the narrative structure. For O'Toole, the "unity and coherence of internal patterning" shape the acts of communication of encoding (writing) and decoding (reading). He proposes that the socio-semiotic values of the structural elements functionally contribute, in an integrative complementary manner, to the construction of the narrative structure, the highest-order semantic level. Yaktine, on the other hand, stresses that the structure of a narrative is created twice: *internally*, through discoursing the story in writing; and *externally*, through creating a unique socio-semiotic space with each reader–text interaction. The two approaches converge though in their rejection of the concept of arbitrariness with regard to the choices of narrative elements and linguistic patterns involved in the construction of

narrative structures. Concordantly, building on Leech and Short (2007), Boase-Beier (2014) affirms that the narrative structure is *iconic* of the situation. Therefore, within context, the narrative structure is genuinely semiotic (Chatman 1978); or, to put it more accurately, the narrative structure may be a *social* semiotic that genuinely connects the narrative texture and context.

4. Recreated narrative structure(s) in the light of multiple contextualisations

4.1. Contexts of creation and interpretation: backdropping the semiotic distance

Translating *O Alquimista* with its present contentious state complicates the situation further: the context of creation positions Coelho's translators' multiply-refracted perceptions of world cultures within three cultural and ideological contexts. The burden of creativity in reproducing an appealing version is duplicated when the deep readers and co-authors are already celebrities with outstanding oeuvre and pre-existing audiences. Careful choice of translators and publishers in the three contexts notably highlight the circumspect attendance of Sant Jordi Asociados, the international presenter of Coelho's rights, to the details of the cross-cultural transference acts. The list of renowned names recreating the narratives, individually or collaboratively, includes celebrated novelists, poets, literary, published and professional translators.

The spectrum of the sociocultural hues of the East, the West and the contrastively unique Turkey creates the contexts of interpretation. English, Arabic and Turkish belong to three distinct language families – Indo-European, Afro-Asiatic and Turkic. The *Ethnologue* annexes the word "Christian" to the English language category; yet the increasing concern with the individual and the Self and the diminishing interest in the soul and spirit can be perspicuously demonstrated in this context (Figure 2). The problem of dichotomising the spiritual and the material may not literally exist for Arabs who are very attached to their religion. The complexity resides in how to recreate a neutral, unprejudiced view of Arabs and their culture. The challenge is special in the Turkish context where the political, ideological, cultural and religious dualisms breed clashing

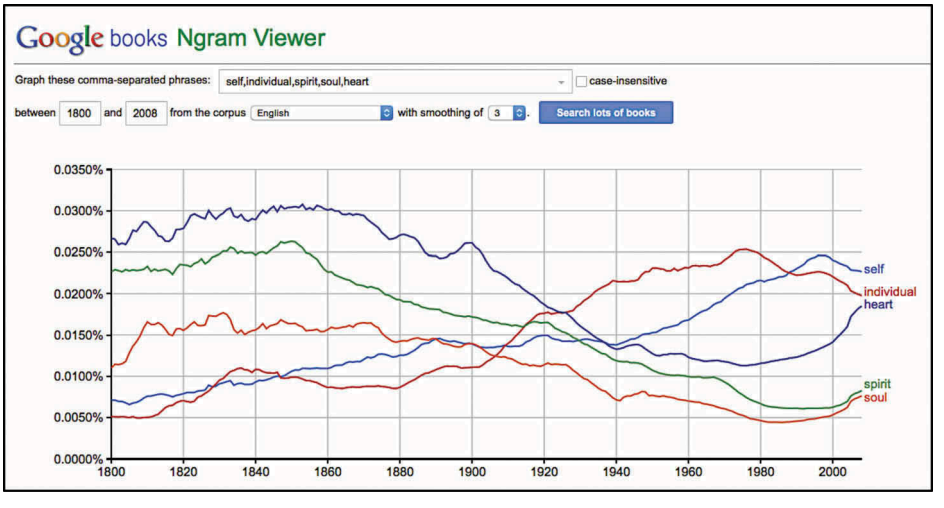

Figure 2. An N-gram view of the recurrence of *self, individual, heart, spirit* and *soul* in Google books in the period between 1800 and 2008. Source: Michel et al 2010

tendencies toward the East and the West (Alver 2013; Argon 2014; Göknar 2008, 472–477, 501–503; Gürçağlar 2008, 49–50, 86–87; Paker 2004, 6, 13; Stone 2010, 236).

4.2. *Story: semantic considerations*

An insightful understanding of the dispositional reconstruction of the story elements on the discursive level uncovers the mechanisms in which the three different discourses operate to allocate variable degrees of significance to their narrative resources (O'Toole 1982). The three translations are copyrighted by Sant Jordi Asociados, which would considerably assure their direct transposition from the original Portuguese text. Any alterations or adjustments in the translations are thus attributed to the translators' external narrative structures created after their exposure to the *same semantic content*.

A distributional-integrative approach to the story events reveals that the story can be broken down into 57 episodes. Each of these episodes forms a minimal semantic unit present in all three versions, and a section of varying length is devoted to each episode. Taking the reader along two material and spiritual story lines framed with a specific epilogue and prologue, the narrative metaphorically utilises the proclaimed aim of the journey to serve other spiritual ends, yielding hence an immanent structure built in the shade of the physical one (Table 1). The two lines meet at a point in Episode 25, which is cardinal for the physical line and simultaneously functions spiritually to facilitate bringing out the inferentially-conceived-of alchemist.

The claimed simplicity of style presenting the canonical fable in fact enshrouds a highly symbolic structure and discursive complexity; allusion is made to a blend of mystical beliefs from the East and West surpassing the material in search of knowledge, spiritual love and complete transcendence (Alaoui 2012; Erbay and Özbek 2013; Muraleedharan 2011; Soni 2014).

4.3. *Title: a paratextual discursive key to constructing narrative structure*

Story bifurcation is, in fact, suggested at the outset by the title as the first stylistic choice with which the reader comes in contact. As a paratext, the title forms "a secondary signal" to which the narrative text (as a totality) is linked. The externality of this paratext does not inhibit its high functionality though. It functions pragmatically on the text level as an interface of the two internal and external narrative structures and hence orients the reader–text relationship (Genette 1997; Yaktine 2006). Accordingly, the polyseme of *alchemy* with its related senses facilitates both encompassing the two acts of physical transmutation and spiritual transformation within one narrative content and directing the reader's interaction with the text along these two lines.

The definition of *alchemy*, though built on shared grounds, subsumes variant socio-semiotic implications in the three contexts. The majority of English dictionaries define *alchemy* as a philosophical pseudoscience or con artistry within the material, physical frame of transmuting metals into gold, and seeking the "grand panacea" and longevity.[1] While reference is occasionally made to magic and supernatural powers, the speculative aspect is scarcely acknowledged.[2] The word in such usage corresponds incompletely to the Arabic ones (*al-sīmyā',al-kīmyā'* and *al-khīmyā'*), which agree in most primary senses, with some lexical subtleties for each. To differentiate between the spiritual and material aspects of the science, *al-khīmyā'*, which can hardly be found in Arabic dictionaries, is of an Egyptian-Greek origin and refers to alchemy,

Table 1. Story bifurcation, episodic distribution and narrative sites.

Narrative site				Story Bifurcation	
Movement	Code		Location	Physical story line *(Seeking buried treasure)*	Spiritual story line *(Spiritual transformation)*
1	E’		Alfayoum		1 The alchemist reading Narcissus’ story
2	A		Andalusia: fields	2 The dream recurring 3 The merchant daughter 4 Excitement and worry	5 Aimless sheep 6 Evil thoughts against sheep 7 Setting purpose 8 Father–son argument 9 The interest of living with a dream
3	B		Andalusia: Tarifa	10 Dream interpretation 11 Before meeting the girl 15 Payment, freedom and wisdom	12 The greatest lie and Melchizedek 13 King of Salem and dream pursuit 14 Taking the decision 16 Starting off the journey
4	C	C1	Tangier: plaza	17 First day in Tangier	18 Realizing the universal language
5		C2	Tangier: crystal shop	19 The crystal merchant 20 A new job 22 Reconsidering a dream 23 Enormous success	21 Dream of travel
6		C3	Tangier: way to the caravan	24 Departing the crystal shop 25 Restoring an original dream 26 The Englishman 27 Warehouse conversation	
7	D		Sahara Desert: from Tangier to Alfayoum	31 Reading alchemy	28 Caravan: swearing and commitment 29 Life of the caravan 30 Warning of war and Soul of the World 32 Complication vs. simplicity 33 Life teaches alchemy 34 Fear 35 Peace

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (*Continued*).

Narrative site				Story Bifurcation	
Movement	Code		Location	Physical story line *(Seeking buried treasure)*	Spiritual story line *(Spiritual transformation)*
8	E		Alfayoum	36 First appearance of the alchemist	38 Meeting at the well and hawks
				37 Oasis and Fatima	42 The alchemist putting the traveller on the road
				39 Courage of a stranger reading omens	43 Discovering life in the desert
				40 Encounter with the alchemist	
				41 Invasion	
				44 Farewell to Fatima	
9	D’	D’1	Sahara Desert: from Alfayoum to Giza	48 Alarm of death	45 Soul of the World and the heart
					46 Communicating with the heart
					47 Strength of the soul
10		D’2	Sahara Desert: military camp	49 Bargaining life	50 Desert and heart: the same language
				51 Getting ready for the display	52 Supernatural display
					53 Astonishment of success
11		D’3	Sahara Desert: at the monastery	54 Alchemist’s destiny	55 Dreams and role of a man
12	F		Giza	56 Digging at the pyramids	
13	A’		Andalusia: fields	57 The treasure	

while the Arabic *al-kīmyā’* denotes the material aspect of transmutation together with modern chemistry. *Al-sīmyā’* derives from the Arabic root *s.w.m* and encompasses a wider lexical scope (*sign, mark, facial expressions, magic* and *early chemistry*) and extends to include some speculative religious and philosophical premises. It is worth mentioning that *al-khīmyā’* was brought back to scientific ground during the heyday of the scientific movement in the Arab and Islamic world (corresponding to the Middle Ages in Europe), and taken afterwards to Europe through Spain under the name *al-kīmyā”* (Al-Hassan n.d.; Bin-Shattooh 2009; Daffah 2003; Kaadan and Qawiji n.d.).[3] Examining the senses of the Arabic word *sīmyā’* serves to unlock the proposed senses provided by the Turkish title *Simyacı* in the present context. In Turkish, two loan words stand for “alchemy”: *simya* (from the Arabic *sīmyā”*) and *alşimi* (from the French *alchimie*). *Simyacı* consists of *simya* and a suffix *-ici* denoting “persons who are professionally or habitually concerned with, or devoted to, the object, person, or quality denoted by the basic words” (Lewis 2000, 55–56).[4]

In the light of alchemy, motivated selections of stylistic, discursive and (para) textual devices collaborate with the title to heighten the material aspects and meet the expectations of the Occident Self. Coelho’s idiosyncratic prefatory Gospel epigraph,

which is kept in Arabic and Turkish, is excluded in English – an omission that correlates with several discursive instances presenting the protagonist's dismissive view of religion and religious practices. Coelho's "syncretic, self-invented form [of Catholicism]" (Goodyear 2007) employs, without adherence to static interpretations of doctrines or any form of commitment to practice, a Jungian view of alchemy postulating that the aim of alchemy is individuation (Dash 2012, 2013; Mongy 2005). One's purpose in life, which is called *destiny* in an older version of the English translation, has been re-translated as a *Personal Legend* (Coelho 1992, 2009, 2014). Juxtaposed to the boy's purpose, this legend foregrounds the mystical and magical nature of alchemy, which "promises that whatever is sought – love, money, inspiration – can be readily attained" (Goodyear 2007). A special patterning of the religious lexis attenuates the spiritual aspect further in Turkish to meet the secularist expectations of Westernisation and uprooting the Ottoman Turks. The neutralised Old Turkic word *Tanrı*, the only lexical item accepted by the Kemalian government (1932–1950) to replace the Islamic *Allāh* in the Muslim call for prayers (Göknar 2008; Gürçağlar 2009), substitutes for most of the Islamic and Christian expressions referring to God in the narrative.

Highlighting the spiritual input is essential in addressing Arabic people and cautiously leading Muslim Turks in the reading process. While the title esteems the Arab scientific history, Coelho's appreciation of the Arab-Islamic literary tradition is intensified in his preface to *al-Khīmiyā'ī* that narrates the germination of the story idea with an allusion to Ernest Hemingway's Santiago of *The Old Man and the Sea*, rejecting implicitly any other possible reference or prejudiced interpretation (See section 4.5) (Coelho 2013). These directing acts are accompanied by two important adjustments. Firstly, some religious expressions, e.g. the Muslim *Allāh* and the Christian *Al-Rabb*, are coordinated with a quoted Qur'ānic verse replacing the paraphrase in English and Turkish (Episode 29), and employed to further contextualise the text. Secondly, and more importantly, the prejudicial attitude against Muslim religious practices is obliterated; the deprecatory word "infidels" has undergone a complex process of adjustment (see Section 4.5). In the Turkish context, mysticism, Sufism, luck and superstition occupy a position. Consequently, the Arabic loan word *Simyacı* is of more appeal to the Turkish reader than the less common, rigid, and materialism-oriented French *Alşimist*. The Pyramids image on the book cover – reinforced by alchemical ideograms in the twenty-fifth anniversary edition – best retrieves the mystical, metaphysical ends of the human monomyths and esoteric journeys (Erbay and Özbek 2013; Mongy 2005). Throughout the text, the reader is led by the *Ç.N.'s* (i.e. *çevirmenin notları*, translator's notes) that, presuming a non-Christian reader, delineate Biblical terms.

4.4. Spatiotemporal relations discoursed and redisoursed

Accommodating the above-mentioned units against the narrative "rarely arbitrary" spatiotemporal backdrop is inescapably essential in creating syntagmatic relations within the composite of units and providing the values against which the character is portrayed and/or judged (O'Toole 1982). A sort of tension is created from the beginning allowing the two strands of the physical and spiritual plots to interweave; the title and the proleptic Greek myth in the Prologue get the reader, while awaiting the aforementioned alchemist, unconsciously immersed in the transformation of the new alchemist, Santiago. In fact, the proposed linearity of the chronological narration of *O Alquimista* is not precisely held; the narrative incorporates a number of

digressions that disclose a broad spectrum of intertextual interactions collaborating with the few analeptic anachronies to disturb the alignment of the chronological disposition of events on the story and discourse levels (Alaoui 2012; Mongy 2005; Nasr-Allah 1999). On the (con)textual level, time is "unspecified" or, rather, obscured (Ibrahim 2013), creating the essential fantastic world characteristic of bestsellers and allowing room for the implementation of alchemy as a motif. The narrative alludes, historically speaking, to an era after the Spanish Reconquista in 1492, which corresponds to the realm of the Memluk Sultanate (1250–1517) when the "Islamic Egypt's glory reached its zenith" (Perry 2004, 51–52). Alfayoum, nonetheless, is historically misrepresented as living in a primitive era providing the land of fantasy.

4.4.1. Narrative placement and interpersonal positioning

The opening clause of the narrative (Episode 2) presents an explicit realisation of what Hasan (1996) calls the Placement Act – a placement that provides an interesting case in the three versions. Character particularisation is attained explicitly, unconventionally abruptly, with a declarative relational clause with two definite nominal groups as Participants. The clause is, again unexpectedly, duplicated in the Arabic and Turkish Epilogue (Episode 57) with a deictic change in the former and identical enunciation in the latter. It is completely excluded in the English Epilogue. The clause reads as (Coelho 1996,17, 2009; 3):

(Eng) *The boy's name was Santiago*.

(Tr) *Delikanlının adı Santiago idi*.

Delikanlı-nın ad-ı Santiago idi

Young man-GEN name-3rdPOSS Santiago PAST-3rd-SING.

The clause is semantically disintegrated and grammatically different to the surrounding context. To open a path of communication with the narratee before *distancing* him *temporally* (Hasan 1996), the clause takes the simple past tense in English and Turkish for the present of the discourse. The past of the past tense is used to refer to events and states past to the discourse time. This latter tense is realised by *had* as a Finite in English, and by *-miş* for the inferential past tense or *-mişti* for the pluperfect past in Turkish. This interpersonal deixis is different in Arabic: the simple present tense is used instead in this introductory clause as present of the discourse, while the narration of the following states and events that are past to the discourse takes both the simple past and past of the past. The opening clause appears in the simple present as (Coelho 2013, 23):

(Ar) *Ism-uh-u Santyāghū*.

Name-3rdPOSS-NOM Santiago

His name (is) Santiago.

The absence of the Process element does not, conventionally, obscure tense (Matthiessen 2001; Saadany 2005); rather, restoring the verbal group, and hence

tense, in the Epilogue contrastively demystifies tense in the above clause (Coelho 2013, 195):

(Ar) *Kāna ism-uh-u Santyāghū.*

Be-PAST Name-3rdPOSS-NOM Santiago

His name was Santiago.

This use of tense may be strategic in catching attention. Such a Placement may be contrasted with its introductory counterpart in Arabic philosophical essays which tends to catch the reader's interest by presenting an "intentionally vague" element in the introduction (Attention Catcher) before drawing logical links between the title and the argument statement (Saadany 2005). This stylistically unfamiliar introductory clause in the narrative may thus function collaboratively with the Prologue and preceding paratexts to both catch the reader's attention and/or deliberately distance him from the text. Any narrated (mis-) presentation of the protagonist's refraction of the Arab's acquaintance may thus be justified and a sense of appreciation of the lenses of the original Brazilian writer may be created.

4.4.2. Reproducing the semiotics of space

The journey proceeds not only in time but also, more importantly, in space. Inconsistency of time frames advises against utilising time as a tool for both segmenting the narrative discursively and textually and making inferences on the construction of the narrative structures. Place instead may provide the criterion that would function properly to serve this end. Consequently, the 57 episodes can be accommodated within 13 movements, and thus be distributed along the narrative sites in which narration takes distinct modes and lexicogrammatical features (see Table 1). Guided by Halliday and Hasan (1985) and Yaktine (2005), delineating the site-movement correlations aids in devising the following formula that would set a structural potential according to which the different constructions of the internal structures in the three versions are explored.

$$\left(1E'.2A.3B.\frac{4.5.6}{C1.2.3}.7D.8E.\frac{9.10.11}{D'1.2.3}.12F.13A'\right)$$

*(') denotes a second(ary) placement

Interestingly, the divergent treatments of the internal narrative structures and recreations of the external ones by the translators yield a varying number of sections allotted to these episodes. While the English version is divided into 47 sections, the number decreases to 43 in Arabic and rises to 54 in Turkish. The varying number of sections demonstrates how each translator segments the total narrative semantics into functions and how his/her interaction with these functions, according to dissimilar criteria, produces variant structures and provides the reader with a further customised version to interact with.

The sections vary in length considerably; however, each is devoted to one specific semantic unit, extending over a varying duration and conceived of and internalised variably. Correlating sections with sites in the light of the above formula, we come to

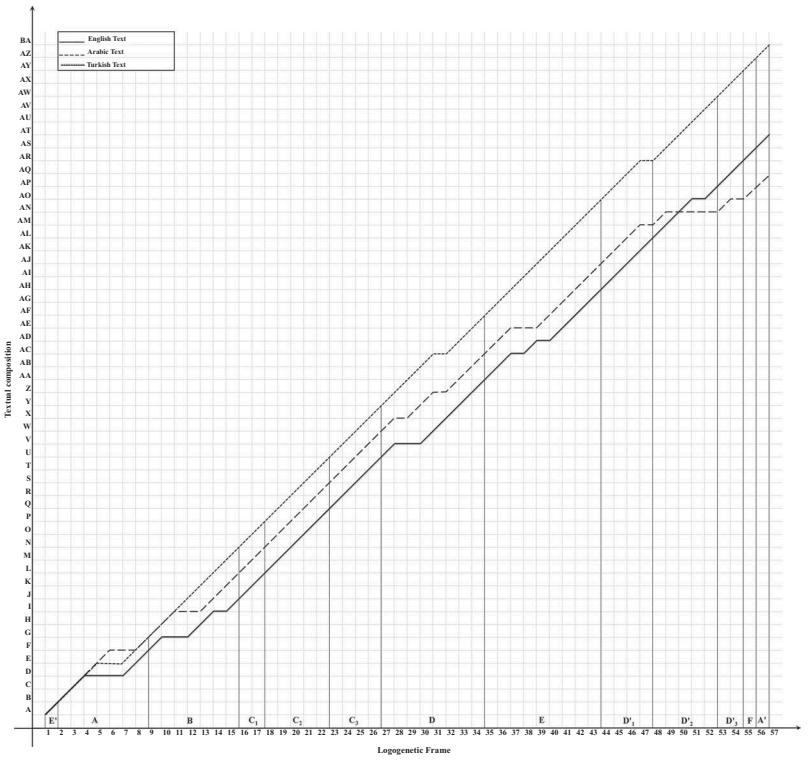

Figure 3. A comparative view of the textual and discursive construction of the narrative structures in the three versions.

conclude the existence of the following structural potentials for the three versions that can be visually presented as in Figure 3:

(Eng)

$$\frac{A}{1E'}\cdot\frac{(B-F)}{2A}\cdot\frac{(G-J)}{3B}\cdot\frac{(K-L)}{4C_1}\cdot\frac{(M-Q)}{5C_2}\cdot\frac{(R-U)}{6C_3}\cdot\frac{(V-AA)}{7D}\cdot\frac{(AB-AH)}{8E}\cdot\frac{(AI-AL)}{9D'_1}\cdot\frac{(AM-AP)}{10D'_2}\cdot\frac{(AQ-AR)}{11D'_3}\cdot\frac{AS}{12F}\cdot\frac{AT}{13A'}$$

(Ar)

$$\frac{A}{1E'}\cdot\frac{(B-G)}{2A}\cdot\frac{(H-L)}{3B}\cdot\frac{(M-N)}{4C_1}\cdot\frac{(O-S)}{5C_2}\cdot\frac{(T-W)}{6C_3}\cdot\frac{(X-AC)}{7D}\cdot\frac{(AD-AJ)}{8E}\cdot\frac{(AK-AM)}{9D'_1}\cdot\frac{AN}{10D'_2}\cdot\frac{AO}{11D'_3}\cdot\frac{AP}{12F}\cdot\frac{AQ}{13A'}$$

(Tr)

$$\frac{A}{1E'}\cdot\frac{(B-G)}{2A}\cdot\frac{(H-N)}{3B}\cdot\frac{(O-P)}{4C_1}\cdot\frac{(Q-U)}{5C_2}\cdot\frac{(V-Y)}{6C_3}\cdot\frac{(Z-AF)}{7D}\cdot\frac{(AG-AO)}{8E}\cdot\frac{(AP-AR)}{9D'_1}\cdot\frac{(AS-AW)}{10D'_2}\cdot\frac{(AX-AY)}{11D'_3}\cdot\frac{AZ}{12F}\cdot\frac{BA}{13A'}$$

A comparative view of the above structural compositions reveals the stretching and/or shortening of the episodic disposition, functionality perception, textual segmentation, and consequently the prolonged and/or elided duration and impact of the reader's engagement with the text within a space-limit. *Simyacı*, with its generosity of sectioning, creates a complex of interest and intrigue through a gradual gaining of momentum, sharing a generic feature with the Turkish telenovelas (a culture-specific form of popular fiction) where the "overlapping intrigues … are highlighted by the end of each episode" (Buccianti 2010). Juxtaposed as such, *Simyacı* may be viewed as further securing cultural

accommodation. This may set the rationale behind segmenting Movement 10D2, for instance, into five sections. Tension in 10D2 is created for the Arab reader by both the idea of transcendence and locale; engrossment of the Arab reader in the desert may require an uninterrupted mode of narration. The English version, however, disregards these considerations and rather depends on a time-based account of the events in the camp hence providing sectioning on a daily basis.

4.5. Dramatis personae in the three contexts: a socio-semiotic view

Coelho's characters are symbolic as well (Alaoui 2012; Hart 2004; Nakagome 2014) – a fact that pushes our argument further for the significance of semiotic distance in modulating the semiotic act of translating. Starting from the selectivity exercised on the characters in relation to setting and theme up to the (absence of) naming, *O Alquimista* utilises the deictic aspect of proper names to specifically delineate its characters.

The protagonist's name in *O Alquimista* presents an interesting case both on the narrative and translation scales. As a way of appealing more to the reader's dreams and individuation, scarcity of naming amplifies the character's attainment of Personal Legends and hence reinforces through relative anonymity that Personal Legends apply to the readers themselves (Nakagome 2014). Right after introducing Santiago, he is positioned in a setting alluding to a history behind the naming and characterisation. Santiago, as a name, can hardly be remembered afterwards, as almost all instances of reference to the protagonist come in one of the following expressions – *the boy, the shepherd, the young Arab, the Spanish boy*, or their equivalents in Arabic and Turkish.

Metaphorically, once mentioned in Episode 2, the protagonist's name scarcely recurs in the three texts, urging a distinctive interaction on the reader's side. *Santiago* recurs with a dual significance in English: narrative and iconographic. The reader is reminded of the name later (Episodes 17 and 40) upon comparing the Moors in their prayer and the alchemist on his horse to the José Gambino statue in Santiago de Compostela – the "infidels" beneath Santiago Matamoros' white horse (Coelho 2009, 34, 109). The name recurs thrice in Arabic and Turkish; yet, through its monosemous reference to the boy, the Spanish iconicity is camouflaged.[5]

The statue has its spiritual, historical and political value in the Spanish discourse as "medieval iconology." The legendary identity of St. James, the patron saint, is three-fold: the apostle, the pilgrim (*Santiago Peregrino*), and the knight (*Santiago Matamoros*) (Chapman 2012; Tiffany 2002). The Spanish phrase, *Santiago Matamoros*, encompasses *Iago* (lit., "James" or "Joseph"); and *Matamoros*, a compound of *matar* (*v.tr.* "to kill, to slaughter") and *moro* ("Moorish, Moor, Arab, pejorative term referring to a North African or Arab person"). St. James (the Moor-Slayer) is said to appear in a vision in the battlefield against the Moors in the Spanish Reconquista giving it "a divine approval"

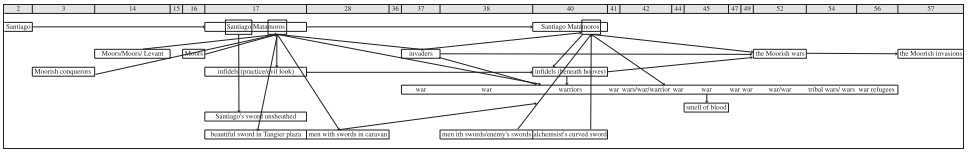

Figure 4. Protagonist's name in a lexical chain developing the narrative structure in English.

(García 2009, 69, 74, 77; Herwaarden, Shaffer, and Gardner 2003, 463–465; Lanzi and Lanzi 2004, 64; Moore 1996).[6]

Santiago and *Santiago Matamoros* significantly connect throughout the English text with other lexical items in a lexical chain; the chain is, however, eloquently broken in Arabic and Turkish. Despite the complicated English attitude toward the knightly aspect of the legend, the translation sets and intensifies the image against the backdrop of the war against the Moors defusing any prejudicial stance against the English people or *Santiago Matamoros*. The allegorical function of this name suggests, through the chain, an upsetting, bloody image of the disparaged Muslim *moros* (see Figure 4), appertaining to an Arab stereotype drawn by Orientalists presenting them as thieves, indolent, fierce, illiterate and naïve (Alaoui 2012; Tooti 2006). Insistence on the knightly name may underscore the protagonist's attitude and may echo the recurrent voices of the Christian community in his area/era.

Cognizant of the hazard of recreating the same presentation to the Arab reader, the rediscoursed Arabic narrative desperately needs to break the chain. A rather neutral version thematically disintegrates the above correlated senses, creating smaller chains with an autonomous image in each. The image of Santiago Matamoros is linked to "malefactors," and *Santiago* as a name is delimited to the boy. Reference to Saint James is made through the Latin version of the name, i.e. Jacobus (Chapman 2012), in its Arabic form *Yaʿqūb*, with the Syriac *mār* (lit., "saint, lord and martyr") as a title.[7] The Arab subconscious is thus directed to the way to Santiago de Compostela, *Ṭarīqu Māri Yaʿqūb*. This adjustment is not attributed to the difficulty of transliterating the name; the complexity relies rather in the need for neutralising, or rather reversing, the pejorative value of "the infidels" and other words. The paragraph first mentioning Santiago Matatmoros in Tangier is completely deleted from the text; the second in Alfayoum is adjusted: St. James, the palmer and apostle, defeats the malefactors. Instead of presenting Arabs as "invaders" in Spain, as described in English, or portraying them bloodily, the warrior chain – be they virtuous or transgressing – encompasses all warriors in one word, *muḥārib* "warrior" (pl. *muḥāribūn*); war is given a spiritually-inspired dimension as a virtuous way of living.

Cohesive devices used in transferring the identity of St. James in Turkish may yield a peaceful, unbiased translation that will assure the Turkish reader of any religious background. While breaking the direct link to the protagonist's name, the identity of St. James as an apostle is highlighted in two ways: through reference to his ancestors, *Zebedioğlu Aziz Yakub'un heykelini görürdü* – "He saw the statue of St. James, son of Zebedee"; and *Zebedioğlu Aziz Yakub'un heykelini anımsadı* – "He remembered the statue of St. James, son of Zebedee"; and through a translator's note uncovering the identity of this figure as a martyred apostle (Coelho 1996, 51, 125, translation mine). The less pejorative or rather neutral "*imansız*" (faithless, unbeliever, atheist) is used instead to refer to the Moors. The translator tries to keep a balance in representing Arabs by invoking both negative and positive senses; the thief in Tangier is an *Arap çocuk*, "Arab child, chap"; yet, Fatima's pride as an Arab girl is with the *mücahitler* (champions of Islam, warriors), a word with an Arabic origin deriving from *cihat* (Ar. *jihād*, i.e. (Islam) holy war). The vast majority of Turks are Muslims who highly value the Islamic conquests in several parts of Asia, Europe and Africa.

5. Conclusion

The dynamicity of the mutually interactive triad of translation, context and narrative structure comes to the fore in the context of bestsellers and in the light of the above premises. The story has been concordantly reproduced with variable semantic ramifications and unique versions of re-discoursing; each is justified by the semiotics of value systems within the receiving culture. These mirror both the translator's sense of external narrative structures (the translator as reader) and their internal structures (the translator as writer). Both perspectives impinge largely on the reader's interaction with narrative.

Structuring the narrative in *O Alquimista* is bound to space rather than time; hence, foregrounding space as a further criteria tool in scrutinising the narrative structure individually or comparatively. Starting with the title that creates particular "narrative positions" (Boase-Beier 2014), the translators interact variably both semiotically and textually with the spatiotemporal and characteriological elements of the narrative: altering considerably the episodic dispositions and typographical proportions; reshaping the cohesive factors, inclusive of the lexical chain of naming and portraying; and adjusting tense resources and the interpersonal positioning with the reader.

The reproduced versions strive to particularly preserve Coelho's renowned preoccupation with simplicity and appeal to popular taste. Heedfully attended and contextualised, each of these narratives structures becomes *iconic* of the norms of the new contexts. The English version teleologically neutralises the spiritual semantic content and heightens the individualist purport, emphasising a sense of self-actualisation on this mystical-material ground. In Arabic, the translation surmounts the difficulty of safely engaging the reader with a portrait of his/her own identity and culture refracted by "Brazilian eyes"; evading senses of bigotry on discourse and textual levels, and approaching the Arab reader amicably. The Turkish text can be sufficiently interpolated within its meta-context as it confronts the challenge of "the [present-day] complex 'who-ness' of Turks and Turkey" (Paker 2004, 13). A uniflow drift of emotions and ideas is created toward the East while a sense of the West is activated. Spirituality is given prominence; yet, linguistic patterns are modulated to satisfy the secularist trends, yielding a version assuring the Turkish reader of any background.

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