

Intertextual Echoes and Translational Reading: A Comparative Study of Persian and English Medieval Poetry⁶

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Abstract

The recent expansion of translation studies beyond purely linguistic transfer allows for the analysis of literary works as acts of cultural transformation. This paper argues that Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* can be read as a profound act of recontextualization of Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*. While a direct textual link remains elusive, the poems share a core structural and thematic narrative architecture. By situating the works within Genette's category of implicit intertextuality and applying the theoretical frameworks of Steiner and Even-Zohar, this study, which is a qualitative one, reveals that Chaucer's poem is not a direct translation but a transmutation, demonstrating the fluid movement of narrative forms and themes along the cultural routes of the medieval world. The *Parliament of Fowls* by Chaucer transforms Attar's *The Conference of the Birds* into something new. The researchers propose that the poem is read as a kind of 'translation' where the poet reinterprets and reworks existing material; this process involves reshaping the imported elements to fit the new context, while at the same time adjusting the target context accordingly.

Keywords: Attar, Chaucer, Intertextuality, Translation

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1. Introduction

Today, researchers in the field of comparative literature are particularly interested in studying global literatures and analyzing them from the viewpoint of similarities in a variety of elements such as topic, subject, theme, motif, style, characters, narrative structure and point of view. Influence of one language and culture on others—in the form of adaptation or translation of the original work in the target language is probable. Building on this comparative perspective, translation serves as a vital channel of cultural exchange, enabling literary traditions to intersect and reshape one another across linguistic boundaries.

The translation of classical works of Persian literature brought many themes and literary techniques into world literature, and the translation of Western literary works led to the emergence of new literary genres such as novels and plays in contemporary Persian literature (Anooshirvani, 2012).

For an optimally effective expression of the meaning exchanged as signs between speaker and hearer or writer and reader, text users show their tendency to engage in higher-level interaction among various utterances or texts. It is intertextuality that adjusts this activity; intertextuality is a processing mechanism through which the meaning of textual elements is transferred because of their dependence on other texts (Bakhtin, 1981 & Beaugrande, 1980 in Hatim & Munday, 2004).

It was Julia Kristeva, who for the first time used the term 'intertextuality' in the 1960s. Within literary and cultural studies, intertextuality has taken the most important role. This term is employed in structuralist, post-structuralist, semiotic, deconstructive, post-colonial, Marxist, feminist and psychoanalytic theories (Allen, 2000). Allen (2000) defines intertextuality as the relations "which exist between a text and all other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations" (p.1).

Literary theorists from classical antiquity until now have been concerned about the relationship of texts to other texts; "Aristotle speculated on the potential shape of tragedies based on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as against other relations of *the Fall of Troy* and its consequence" (Bauman, 2004, p.1).

This longstanding interest in textual relationships provides the foundation for modern discussions of translation and intertextuality, which extend classical insights into new cultural and linguistic contexts.

A text is never truly original; it becomes an intertext, constantly referencing the texts that came before it. It inherits from the past, exists in the present, and influences

the future. It is connected to older texts and to all other texts being created at the same time. Intertextuality can be broken down into two main categories. One is *overt*, which is when a text directly and openly includes elements from other texts, like using direct quotes or clear citations. The other type is *covert*, where the connection is more subtle. In this case, a text might borrow a genre, a specific style of language, or even core ideas from other works without ever explicitly mentioning them. It is not a strict division, though; a single text can weave in both direct quotes and more subtle references at the same time (Farahzad, 2009).

Transtextuality or textual transcendence was coined by Genette. It is his version of intertextuality and architextuality. "Genette wishes to employ this concept to chart ways in which texts can be systematically interpreted and understood." (Allen, 2000, p.101).

He identifies five distinct sub-categories, the first of which he terms intertextuality, which is defined as 'a relationship of co-presence between two texts or among several texts' and as 'the actual presence of one text within another'. Quotation, plagiarism, and allusion are considered as intertextual trace (Allen, 2000).

Genette (1997) identifies *paratextuality* as the second type of transtextuality; the paratext shapes how a text is received by its audience. It encompasses the threshold elements of a work: the *peritext* like titles, prefaces, notes and the *epitext*-materials external to the text itself. Metatextuality is the third type of transtextuality, that is, when a text takes up a relation of 'commentary' to another text. Genette's fourth category of transtextuality, *hypertextuality*, describes the relationship between a later text (the hypertext, or text B) and an earlier source text (the hypotext, or text A). Genres such as pastiche, parody, travesty, and caricature fall within this category. The final form of transtextuality, which Genette terms *architextuality*, highlights the influence of the reader's anticipations on the way a text is received. This architextual layer includes the generic, modal, thematic, and figurative codes that frame how audiences approach and interpret a work. (Allen, 2000).

As Birsanu (2010) explains, items of world literature show a combination of cultural interrelation and shared reflection. No piece in this literary work is on its own; the poetic meaning is attained through distinct reference and each part is influenced by other pieces and the context.

When words are set to music, they retain their identity while becoming part of a new formal structure. If a composer employs a translation, the alteration of the original verbal signs is that of translation in the strict sense. Yet, beyond direct

transposition or translation, countless formal variations and degrees of transformation emerge. These range from the most faithful echo to the most distant and often unconscious reference, resonance, or allusion (Steiner, 1998).

Lefevere (1992) views translation as the most influential form of rewriting, encompassing practices such as anthologizing, translation proper, criticism, and literary histories. He argues that rewriting involves reshaping original material to align with the ideological currents or aesthetic priorities of a particular era or author.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

This study investigates the intricate and often implicit intertextual relationships between Attar's *The Conference of the Birds* and Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Parliament of the Fowls*. Specifically, it examines how Chaucer rather than engaging in direct quotation or overt allusion, subtly incorporates and transforms elements from Attar's seminal work. These covert intertextual references are not merely replicated; they are actively reshaped, creating new literary material and novel artistic expressions that may either preserve or significantly alter their original meanings.

Drawing upon the theoretical foundations laid by scholars such as Steiner (1998) and Even-Zohar (1981), this research posits that Chaucer's dynamic reinterpretation, strategic shifts, and creative rewritings of Attar's text elevate *The Parliament of the Fowls* to the status of a sophisticated act of translation. In this view, both the poet and the reader are active participants, collaboratively constructing and deconstructing the poem's rich, layered significations.

Consequently, this paper addresses the central problem of how to systematically describe and analyze the covert intertextuality between Attar's *The Conference of the Birds* and Chaucer's *The Parliament of the Fowls* as a complex act of translation, moving beyond simple influence or adaptation to a profound cross-cultural and cross-temporal literary negotiation.

The paper will substantiate the argument that *The Parliament of the Fowls* achieves a profound recontextualization of *The Conference of the Birds*, not through literal borrowing, but via a sophisticated process of interpretive transformation. In a masterful display, Chaucer transforms borrowed elements so they harmoniously integrate into the late medieval English cultural and literary context, all while simultaneously augmenting and diversifying this context.

Contemporary understandings of translation have evolved considerably, transcending a purely linguistic paradigm. As Birsanu (2010) notes, translation is now recognized as encompassing a broader spectrum of meaning transfer, inter-

systemic relations, and diverse interpretive processes, including adaptation and intricate recontextualizations (p. 21). Examining intertextuality through this expanded lens of translation illuminates the dynamic connections between texts and cultures. It demonstrates how literary works serve as vital platforms for cultural exchange, fostering reinterpretation and the creation of emergent meanings. This intricate process of referencing and recontextualizing disparate textual traditions results in a complex interplay of meanings that actively surpasses mere linguistic boundaries (Birsanu, 2010).

Furthermore, the performative nature of translation is crucial here. As articulated by Rao (2006), "Translation is neither repetition of the same original authority nor the relativist equalization of different linguistic communities," being instead "the performative process of 'negotiating' time and space within the disjunction" and consisting "in relocating the performance of translation within the future tense of enunciation and the spatial experience of displacement" (p. 89 in Italiano, 2016, p. 6). By framing Chaucer's intertextual strategies as a form of translation, this study offers a novel methodology for understanding how literary traditions interact, adapt, and innovate across cultural and historical boundaries. It seeks to move beyond traditional notions of influence to reveal a more active, transformative, and collaborative process between authors and their textual heritage.

1.2. Research Questions

1. Which form of intertextuality best describes the connection between Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* and Attar's *The Conference of Birds*, particularly with respect to their thematic features and narrative structures?
2. How do the resonances of Attar's *The Conference of the Birds* within Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* exemplify intertextuality conceived as translation, when analyzed through the theoretical frameworks of Steiner and Even-Zohar?

1.3. Theoretical Framework

Namvar Motlagh (2008) notes that, in Genette's framework (1997), intertextuality is considered a subdivision of transtextuality and is further categorized into three distinct types:

- a) Explicit intertextuality: In this type of intertextuality, the clear presence of one text within another can be observed. In other words, the author of the second text does not conceal the reference to the first text. For this reason, the presence of

another text is visible. From this perspective, quotation is considered a form of intertextuality, which itself is divided into quotations with references and quotations without references.

b) Hidden intertextuality: It indicates the hidden presence of one text within another. The difference here is that this type of intertextuality deliberately seeks to conceal its source. Plagiarism is one of the most important forms of hidden intertextuality, in which a text is used without permission and without citing the source.

c) Implicit intertextuality: Sometimes, the author of the second text does not intend to conceal the intertext. For this reason, they employ certain signs or markers that make it possible to recognize the intertextuality and even identify its source. Therefore, implicit intertextuality neither openly declares its source like explicit intertextuality, nor attempts to conceal like hidden intertextuality. The most important forms of this type of intertextuality include allusions, hints, and references.

In order to read the research through the lens of translation, the study draws upon the notions advanced by Steiner (1998) and Even-Zohar (1981).

Drawing on Jakobson's (1992) classification of translation types, Steiner designs a new category which he places in between 'translation proper' and 'transmutation'. He calls it 'partial transformation', which covers a wide range of cultural manifestations. They include "paraphrase, graphic illustration, pastiche, imitation, thematic variation, parody, citation in a supporting or undermining context, false attribution (deliberate or accidental), plagiarism, collage and others (Steiner, 1998, p. 437).

The numerous transformations and reconfigurations linking an original verbal event to its later reappearances in verbal or non-verbal forms are most appropriately understood as topological. By examining invariants that persist through transformation, topology uncovers structural unities across seemingly diverse mathematical forms. Cultural expressions, too, display underlying constants despite their manifold variations; the constants may appear in verbal form, as thematic elements, or as formal structures. Viewed topologically, culture can be understood as a chain of translations and transformations of constants, with translation inherently moving toward transformation (Steiner, 1998).

Transformations may extend from linguistic expression to metalinguistic or even non-linguistic codes. Transformations move fluidly from words to symbols, sounds, and images. A Homeric passage might be set to music, whether in its original form or in translation. It could serve as the caption to a painting or sculpture that brings an episode to life. But the artist—whether painter, sculptor, or choreographer—does not need to name the text directly. They can imagine it, reflect on it, or perform it with more or less faithfulness. Their interpretations may range from photographic imitation to parody, satire, or elusive and subtle allusions. It falls to us to recognize and piece together the unique power of these connections. (Steiner, 1998)

It is accepted that translation involves rephrasing an utterance 'a' from one language A into an utterance 'b' in a language B. This process of breaking down and reconstructing expressions—'decomposition' and 'recomposition'—across languages was recognized as inherently translational. However, when the outcome deviated from predefined expectations—such as avoiding clear omissions or additions—it was labeled as "adaptation" or "imitation" and excluded from translation theory. Since real-world cases rarely fit neatly into these criteria, a large number of translations ended up being classified as non-translational. If we had compiled basic statistics, we might have found that most translations actually fall outside the scope of traditional theory. Still, this approach has been a valid way to build a coherent theoretical framework (Even-Zohar, 1981).

2. Review of Literature

The influence of Eastern literature and culture on the West has been researched many times in various fields- Gardner (1987) alludes to Chaucer's indebtedness to Eastern literary traditions, though without citing particular texts or authors. Iffat Zakaria (2000) focuses on Chaucer's encounters with the East and Muslims, noting structural and thematic parallels between Attar's *Conference of the Birds* and Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*. The presence of Eastern ideas is evident in many literary works of the West. The idea of 'speech of the birds' is one of these effective components. According to some research, *The Parliament of Fowls*, which has been translated into Arabic under the title '*Majlis al-Toyur*', could be written under the influence of Eastern and Islamic culture (Dorri, et al., 2012).

Readers, familiar with medieval European literature, will recognize that Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* and the poem *The Owl and the Nightingale* recall

Attar's method. These European classics often align in tone and technique with Attar's poem. (Attar, 1984).

Chaucer, in common with many medieval authors, pursued the practice of imitation and adaptation. Few of his narratives originate wholly from his own invention; rather, he drew extensively upon earlier sources. Yet his borrowings are distinguished by their artistry: whenever he appropriated a tale, he reshaped it so thoroughly that the new version often surpassed its model. He borrowed with audacity, transformed with skill, and through addition and omission alike, produced works of striking originality. Although his exemplars were foreign, through his artistry, Chaucer localized these traditions, rendering them authentically English. His themes were adapted from the literatures of other nations—most notably Rome, France, Italy, and, through intermediaries, the East—yet he fashioned them into some of the finest works in English. Among the figures who left a mark on his writing we may list Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Dante from Italy, alongside Ovid, Virgil, and Boethius from ancient Rome (Noohi, 2008).

Javadi (2019), who explores the influence of Persian literature on English literature throughout different eras, argues that translating Persian texts into English is crucial for their introduction and for inspiring imitation by writers worldwide. He offers a brief assessment of two translations of *Mantiq al-Tayr* (*the Conference of the Birds*), highlighting their shortcomings and inaccuracies, and ultimately recommends the translations by Davis and Darbandi as appropriate interpretations of this literary work. He believes that these translations have played a significant role in elevating the recognition of these renowned poets both internationally and within their own country.

The influence of Attar's literary contributions extends globally, impacting Persian and non-Persian writers alike—some examples are provided here. In her study entitled 'A Comparative Study of Mystical Journey in Farid al-Din Attar Nishaburi's *The Conference of the Birds* and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*', Saghinezhad (2018) studied a comparative analysis of the theme of spiritual journey in these two works in the light of mysticism. The findings from this research provide evidence that despite differences in time, religion, and cultural history, pilgrims of both works go through shared stages and reach the same goal throughout their spiritual progression on the Path to the Absolute Truth.

Kabiri Pahlevani (2020) in the thesis entitled '*Features of a Dramatic Adaptation of Classical Literature Focusing on the Story of Simorgh in Conference of*

the Birds by Attar Based on Joseph Campbell's Theories' writes that *Conference of the Birds* by Attar is one of the various Iranian classics and one of the best literary examples of the spiritual journey. It is a story of birds trying to find Simorgh. They travel seven lands on a mystical journey. Joseph Campbell in the twentieth century proposed the archetypal theory of his hero's journey to study the ancient and modern works of various nations. The results of the present study were obtained after matching *The Conference of the Birds* by Attar and two plays adapted from it (*Do Morghe Akhare Eshgh (the Last Two Lovebirds)* by Chista Yasrebi and *Si Morgh, Simorgh va Safare Ghahreman (Thirty Birds, Simorgh and the Hero's Journey)* by Ghotb al-Din Sadeghi) with the stages of the hero's journey based on the analytical-descriptive and library method.

Gholami Sha'bani (2010) in her thesis with the title 'A Comparative and Analytical Study on *Mantiq al-Tayr* of Attar and *Interior Castle: The Masterpiece of Saint Teresa of Avila*' compares an Islamic mystical work, *Mantiq al-Tayr* by Attar, with a Christian mystical work of St. Teresa of Avila entitled, *Interior Castle*. In Attar's work, the allegory of the soul in the shape of a bird is used whose antecedents are found in different cultures and Ibn-e Sina has inserted it into Islamic mysticism by his *Resalah al-Tayr*. So, the foundation of the latter's work, the same as *Mantiq al-Tayr*, is the explanation of demeanor of the soul in seven states up to the "spiritual marriage" or "Unity". These two works are related intertextually.

Some researchers investigate intertextual relationships among literary works and analyze them within the framework of translation studies.

Discussing the new meaning of translation, Italiano (2016) analyzes Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. He explains that it exemplifies a geopoetic translation, showcasing how Captain Nemo's underwater resources are transformed into the gastronomic code of the dry-land world—with a distinct French influence. This unique translation, termed *translatio maris*, incorporates oceanic elements and reinterprets themes from Homer's *Odyssey*, recontextualizing them within Nemo's vast oceanic realm. The novel translates the essence of the sea into terrestrial frameworks, reflecting Western intellectual traditions and echoing the earlier concept of "translatio imperve et studii." Verne's narrative also evokes *Odysseus's* maritime adventures while connecting to the emerging field of oceanography, frequently referencing Fontaine Maury's (1858) *The Physical Geography of the Sea*. (Italiano, 2016)

Birsanu (2010) studies *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot as an example of intertextual work depicting a variety of meanings possibly linked to translation. She explains that the poem serves as a ground for diverse literary, cultural, and historical encounters, constructing an intertextual fabric that enables the study of intertextuality as a mode of translation—viewed through the lenses of meaning transfer, cultural transformation, and reinterpretation. In her paper, Birsanu (2010) supports the idea that *the Waste Land* is deemed a work of translation since the reader has to ‘compose and decompose’ with the poet the distinct layers of significances.

Many scholars have studied Chaucer and Attar, and some have looked at broader links between Persian and Western literature. Within this context, researchers often point out that Attar’s literary vision can be heard in foreign works, especially in Chaucer’s allegory *The Parliament of Fowls*. These similarities highlight the shared themes and imagination that connect the two writers across cultures. Yet, even with these noted parallels, their works have rarely been studied through the lens of translation. Without this perspective, readers may miss how language and cultural transfer might shape the way Attar’s ideas were received and adapted in Chaucer’s writing.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, comparative intertextual analysis from the perspective of Steiner (1998) and Even-Zohar (1981). The approach was selected to illuminate structural and thematic resonances between Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Parliament of Fowls* and Farid al-Din ‘Attār’s *Conference of the Birds*- a subtype of intertextuality as defined by Genette (1997) - with the aim of evaluating the possibility of cultural transformation across traditions. Primary data were collected through library research, including critical editions of both texts, while secondary data were drawn from scholarly commentaries, journal articles, and reference works accessed through academic databases.

The analysis proceeded through a systematic process of close reading, in which each text was examined for thematic features; motifs, symbols, allegorical figures, and narrative structures; plot, characters, conflicts, setting and point of view that could reveal potential intertextual parallels. Recurring themes and structural patterns were then coded and mapped across the two works to identify points of convergence and divergence. These findings were subsequently interpreted through

the lens of cultural transformation, highlighting the ways in which allegorical strategies shift meaning when reframed across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Attar's Echoes in Chaucer's work

The similarities between Attar's *The Conference of Birds* and Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* become evident when their narrative structure, allegorical elements and thematic features are compared. Among the shared features of these two works are the theme of love, the presence of a judge overseeing debates, storytelling as a central device, and birds used as symbols for different concepts.

4.1.1. Echoes in Narrative Structure

Attar's narrative illustrates the choices the birds must make in their quest for the Simorgh, reflecting the inner struggles of individuals in their spiritual journeys. Central to these narratives is the idea of a spiritual journey. In *The Conference of the Birds*, the expedition of thirty birds in search of the legendary Simorgh serves as a profound metaphor for the pursuit of divine truth and self-discovery; each valley represents a stage of mystical transformation. During the allegorical quest, the birds gradually fall away until only thirty remain. Upon arriving at the abode of the Simorgh, these thirty discern that the Simorgh is a reflection of their collective being. The Persian word *si* denotes thirty, underscoring the symbolic play between name and number.

The Parliament of Fowls is framed as a dream vision, where the narrator enters a garden and witnesses a debate among birds over mate selection. The story ends with the female eagle deferring her choice, mirroring the ambiguity of courtly love. The birds' debate lacks resolution; the female eagle postpones her decision, and the narrator awakens. The conclusion remains open-ended, foregrounding ambiguity and the dynamics of social performance.

There are allusions to Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*—notably; the title *The Parliament of Fowls* and its cover illustration of birds perched on a tree both reflect inspiration from Attar's work. It utilizes allegorical narratives featuring animals to impart ethical teachings.

In Attar's *Conference of the Birds*, the birds hesitate, excusing themselves from the path of love, for they cannot bear the vision of the Simorgh's majesty. Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*, however, presents these same birds speaking boldly, eager to claim their share of earthly affection and worldly delight. In essence, Chaucer's birds

are Attar's birds placed in two divergent trials: one bound to the pursuit of transient joy, the other through the annihilation of self in order to attain eternal subsistence in Truth. Their differing voices and capacities reflect the varied strengths of humankind—distinctions already traced by the hand of fate (Noohi, 2008).

4.1.2. Thematic Resonances

Both poets, like many others, use birds as artistic symbols to express the ideas they aim to convey. While Attar critiques certain social inequalities in some of his tales and allegories, and Chaucer comments on politics and society in his narratives, they share a common interest in the theme of 'love'. However, the nature and interpretation of love in their works differ significantly. Chaucer portrays courtly love shaped by medieval ideals, whereas Attar focuses on divine love as defined within Eastern mystical traditions (Lalbaksh, 2014).

Love is a key feature in Attar's *Conference of Birds*. The birds traverse seven valleys, the second of which—"Love"—emerges as the most significant and genuineness of the seeker is tested in this valley. Comparing the nature of love in the *Conference of the Birds* with the *Parliament of Fowls*, it can be said that Attar's definition of love is not a worldly one, unlike that of Chaucer's. In *The Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer uses the natural world to symbolize courtly love and political allegory, reflecting on human society (Baeten, 2020).

Attar's 'birds' represent the various dimensions of the human soul, each refined through the trials they endure along their spiritual path. The characteristics of the birds reflect those of people directly, such as the Nightingale's love, the Peacock's vanity, the Partridge's materialism, and the Owl's solitude. When birds offer excuses, it symbolizes a flaw within humanity that hinders personal enlightenment, which must be surmounted prior to reaching the destination. The birds represent distinct personas, each with unique traits; some are preoccupied with material wealth, while others seek power, some delve into philosophy, and others exhibit narcissistic tendencies (Attar, 1984). These characters represent a wide spectrum of social classes, including prophets, kings, princesses, caliphs, Sufis or sheikhs, beggars, and others (Baeten, 2020).

The Parliament of Fowls similarly utilizes personification in its portrayal of birds representing various societal roles and attributes. The gathering of birds to discuss issues of love and partnership serves as a microcosm of human society, allowing Chaucer to comment on the intricate relationships and social structures that govern

human interactions. Birds in *the Parliament of Fowls* symbolize different social classes; the noble eagles represent the aristocratic ideals, while the common birds express more relatable, earthly views. This hierarchy reflects the structure of English society at the time. (Baeten, 2020)

Another significant aspect present in these works is the role of a guiding figure. In each narrative, a leader or judge emerges to offer direction, address inquiries, and mediate conflicts. This figure acts as a source of wisdom and authority, assisting the characters in navigating the complexities of their journeys.

For Attar, the 'hoopoe' symbolizes the leader or Sheikh, while the Simorgh, regarded as the sovereign for whom the birds are in search, represents God, having lost their own identities in pursuit of Him. Simorgh, the mythical phoenix, is a mystical avian figure in Persian mythological literature known for its extraordinary powers. Positioned atop *Qaf* Mountain and near the sun, Simorgh embodies the creator and serves as the emblem of perfection. The hoopoe acts as a sagacious leader, guiding the other birds (30 birds such as the nightingale, the parrot, the hawk, the duck, the partridge, the peacock, the heron, the finch, etc.) towards their ultimate objective. The hoopoe, serving as the guiding bird, articulates the nature of love as follows: Many yearn for pilgrimage, seeking the fulfillment of their deepest desires through journeys to distant lands, where the essence of the soul's longing may be uncovered. The path lies open to those who follow it, offering guidance and support when love calls—provided they set aside their burdens and embrace the quest before them. (Attar, 1984).

In *The Parliament of Fowls*, the sacred seat of the "Goddess of Nature" is placed upon a lofty height, exercising full authority over her surroundings; while in *The Conference of the Birds*, the Simorgh's abode lies on Mount *Qaf* — said to encircle the entire world. Despite their differences in cultural and religious framing, both works share a similar idea: the birds' assembly is presided over by a transcendent figure whose elevated position symbolizes ultimate order and authority. The symbolic roles of birds may shift between the two works, at times even appearing in reversed form. In Attar, the hoopoe is exalted as a mystical leader inspired by the Qur'an, yet in Chaucer it stands among ordinary birds, marked instead as a symbol of hypocrisy (Noohi, 2008).

5. Results and Discussion

With regard to the first question on the type of intertextuality, one may conclude that the *Parliament of Fowls* by Chaucer does not engage in direct intertextuality, as it lacks explicit quotations or overt references to Attar's *the Conference of the Birds*. Chaucer does not explicitly reference Persian sources. The relationship is detectable only through comparative reading, not through overt textual markers. Beneath the surface, one can trace indirect and latent resonances with Persian literary traditions, suggesting a subtler mode of intertextual relations that require interpretive attention. Instead of quoting or naming another work, a text quietly absorbs its structures, themes, and allegorical framework. Thus, based on Genette's Idea it is a type of implicit intertextuality.

As for the second question on the echoes of Attar's *The Conference of the Birds* in Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls*, it can be argued that both texts employ almost similar structure; 'bird assemblies' as allegorical frameworks. Yet they diverge in their philosophical orientation; Attar's work stages a mystical pilgrimage toward divine unity, while in Chaucer's work, a satirical debate unfolds around themes of romance and social order. Each narrative is structured around a central guiding figure—the 'hoopoe' in Attar's work and 'Nature' in Chaucer's—facilitating the birds' dialogue. However, their roles diverge; the hoopoe directs a sequential spiritual journey through seven symbolic valleys, while Nature oversees a static, unresolved discussion within the framework of a dream. Despite these differences, both texts engage with themes of desire, social hierarchy, and the interplay between personal will and collective order. Although Chaucer's poem is not a literal translation of Attar's, it can be interpreted as a cultural 'transfer', relying on Even Zohar's (1981)—transforming the mystical quest into a courtly setting and recasting spiritual yearning as romantic hesitation.

Interpreting Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* through the lens of translation as cultural transfer reveals it as a refined transformation of Attar's allegory rather than a literal reproduction. Chaucer's work exemplifies what Steiner (1998) terms 'cultural transformation', in which borrowed elements are reshaped to fit new contexts while the receiving text adapts to incorporate these transformed motifs. The hoopoe's role as spiritual guide is rearticulated into Nature's secular authority; the *Qaf* Mountain, symbolizing divine union, is transposed into the garden of Venus, a courtly space governed by desire and rhetorical negotiation; and the seven valleys of spiritual progress are substituted with a rhetorical arena of unresolved debate. Even the birds'

collective quest undergoes transformation; what was once a path toward annihilation of the self in divine presence becomes a symbolic struggle for romantic agency within a hierarchical order.

Even-Zohar's (1981) 'transfer as translation' situates this transformation within the English literary system, showing how Chaucer's rewriting functions as a cultural transfer that integrates foreign allegorical structures into medieval English poetics. Unlike Attar's guiding hoopoe, Chaucer's narrator remains passive within a dream state, underscoring the shift from spiritual instruction to reflective contemplation. In this way, Chaucer's poem operates as a 'translational act'; it retains the foundational framework of Attar's allegory while reshaping its spiritual journey into a meditation on worldly longing, postponed decisions, and the dynamics of social interaction. This process highlights the interwoven character of medieval literary culture, in which narratives traveled across regions and languages to be reimagined in new ideological and aesthetic contexts. Chaucer's *the Parliament of Fowls* thus exemplifies translation not as linguistic substitution, but as cultural rewriting—an intricate act of transfer that demonstrates how medieval texts engaged in dialogue across systems, reshaping inherited meanings to suit contemporary concerns. Allegorical elements are transposed to suit the epistemological and poetic norms of medieval England.

Through a comparative analysis, it was found that Chaucer depicted tangible, objective realities to highlight the political and social unrest of his era, while Attar viewed social corruption as an impediment to spiritual development.

This text argues that *the Parliament of Fowls* is a key example of how culture repeats past meanings, a concept put forth by Steiner (1998). Since translation is a crucial part of culture, the poem's use of numerous references from different cultural backgrounds is viewed as a form of 'translation'. The paper notes that these connections can be as direct as a simple repetition or as subtle as a vague allusion, but the relationship is always one of dependence and structured like a translation. Chaucer's work is not just about reusing old texts; it is about a two-step process of change: first, the borrowed text is modified so it works within the poem, and second, the poem itself adapts to incorporate this new, transformed element.

The findings of this study suggest that Geoffrey Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* should be approached not as a derivative imitation of Farid al-Din 'Aṭṭār's *Conference of the Birds*, but rather as a creative transmutation of its allegorical framework. In Genette's terms, the relationship between the two texts is one of implicit intertextuality: Chaucer does not translate Attar's mystical allegory directly, but

instead reshapes its motifs into a new literary and cultural register. This act of transformation underscores the dynamic processes by which texts migrate across linguistic and cultural boundaries, acquiring fresh meanings in the process.

6. Conclusion

The research demonstrates that translation may operate not only as linguistic substitution but as cultural transfer, partial transmutation and rewriting. These findings encourage broader comparative work on medieval texts, revealing how intertextual exchanges might have contributed to the evolution of global literary traditions.

Although structural and thematic intertextualities between *The Parliament of Fowls* and Attar's *Conference of the Birds* are evident, the precise channels of transmission remain uncertain. This research found no documentary evidence to confirm Chaucer's direct access to Attar's Persian text, and any influence must be understood as mediated through possible intermediaries. This absence of verifiable textual circulation limits the claim of direct borrowing. As with all comparative literary studies, conclusions about resonance and translation are interpretive, shaped by the researcher's perspective, and may differ from other critical readings. The research is deliberately delimited to a focused comparison between Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* and Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*, examining thematic features and narrative structures rather than linguistic translation, and situating the discussion within medieval literary culture rather than modern adaptations. These parameters establish the study's scope while recognizing the interpretive flexibility inherent in comparative literary analysis.

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