

Divided Identities and Divided Selves: Fictional Translators in Turkish Literature

Bölünmüş Kimlikler, Bölünmüş Benlikler: Türk Edebiyatında Çevirmen Karakterler

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Abstract

The article focuses on the representations of translator and interpreter characters in Ottoman and contemporary Turkish literature. It specifically highlights the depiction of these characters as individuals suffering from identity issues, including mental instability. We argue that this recurring theme is not merely a coincidence, but a reflection of the complexities of translation and the anxieties surrounding cultural transformation. We explore the origins of this trend in early Ottoman novels, which responded to the process of Westernization and its effects on Ottoman society. We then turn to contemporary works, where translators continue grappling with identity issues and are increasingly prone to forms of psychosis. Our goal is to offer a nuanced understanding of the translator's role, both as a figure caught between worlds and as a potential source of cultural and linguistic insight.

Öz

Bu makale, Osmanlı ve çağdaş Türk edebiyatındaki yazılı ve sözlü çevirmen karakterlerin temsillerine odaklanmaktadır. Bu karakterlerin edebî eserlerde, akli dengesizlik de dâhil olmak üzere kimlik sorunları yaşayan bireyler olarak tasvir edildiği vurgulanmaktadır. Çalışmada tekrar eden bu temanın sadece bir tesadüf olmadığı, çevirinin karmaşıklığının ve kültürel dönüşümü çevreleyen endişelerin bir yansıması olduğu öne sürülmektedir. Bu eğilimin kökenleri, önce Batılılaşma sürecini ve bunun Osmanlı toplumu üzerindeki etkilerini yansıtan ilk Osmanlı romanları üzerinden irdelenmektedir. Ardından, çevirmenlerin kimlik sorunlarıyla boğuşmaya devam ettiği ve bu sorunların psikoz boyutuna ulaşip giderek daha da arttığı çağdaş eserler ele alınmaktadır. Amacımız, hem dünyalar arasında sıkışmış bir birey hem de kültürel ve dilsel bir kaynak olarak çevirmenin rolünü daha detaylı incelemektir.

Keywords

Fictional translators, identity, madness, transfiction, transmesis, metalepsis

Anahtar Kelimeler

Kurmacada çevirmen, kimlik, delilik, transfiction, transmesis, metalepsis

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Introduction

Sait Faik’s assertion, “I would have gone mad if I hadn’t written,” serves as the concluding line of his story “Haritada bir Nokta” (“A Point on the Map”). In this final passage, he reflects on his internal struggle:

I had promised myself I would not write. What was writing but an ambition? I planned to await a quiet death among honorable people. Why did I need ambition and rage? I couldn’t do it. I rushed to the tobacconist, purchased pen and paper, and sat down. I retrieved my pocket knife, which I carried to carve small sticks during tedious travels along the island’s desolate roads. I fashioned the pen, held it, and kissed it. I would have gone mad if I hadn’t written.¹

The desire to write and the aspiration to be a successful author is a recurring theme in Turkish literature, particularly in novels that depict the experiences of translators. In this literary tradition, the writer-hero often occupies a central role and the writers can be categorized into two distinct groups: “ideal” writers, who achieve success and hold a prominent position in society both as literary figures and intellectuals, and those who remain marginalized, unable to establish themselves in the literary world—often referred to as half-heroes², failed heroes who were usually on the brink of madness. Since the 19th century, the predominant representation of writers in our literature has been that of these half-heroes. These figures, unable to assert themselves and lacking a socially successful existence, are positioned in contrast to the “ideal writer.” This is the same for translator characters since the very first novels written in Ottoman- Turkish in the 19th century.

This article traces the fictional representation of translators in two separate periods in Turkish literature including the early novels in the Ottoman period and the 21st century through the particular common themes of identity and madness. Translator characters in the post-Tanzimat period and translator characters in contemporary literature share similar characteristics: they are all male, orphaned, Western educated and marginal figures. They live in a state of self-imposed solitude and experience illusions and delusions. Mistranslations and misunderstandings are also common features of the novels and usually form the main skeleton of the narratives. In this article, we will specifically dwell on the presentation of delusional characters as translators with a focus on the link between identity, translation and madness. Before moving on to the analysis of the translator characters in fictional works, we will provide a brief overview of the introduction of the novel genre to the late Ottoman culture in order to better contextualize some aspects of the translator characters, such as their status as half-heroes.

¹ Sait Faik Abasıyanık, *Son Kuřlar* (İstanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 1959), 51

² Oylum Yılmaz, “Yazmasam Ölecektim ya da bir Teselli Ver,” *Litera edebiyat* (2021). Accessed October 8, 2024. <https://www.literaedebyat.com/post/oylum-yilmaz-umut-dosya-yazmasaydim-olecektim>.

Literature Review

In recent decades, there has been a notable increase in scholarly works exploring the representation of translators and translation in literature and film, a trend referred to as the “fictional turn”³. This shift, characterized by a heightened focus on the fictional depiction of translators and the act of translation, has been accompanied by a surge in academic interest. This growing field is reflected in the proliferation of international conferences, books, and publications dedicated to analyzing these representations from diverse perspectives.

The first systematic study shedding light on the fictional representation of translators in the west was the special issue of *Linguistica Antverpiensia* published in 2005 under the title “Fictionalising Translation and Multilingualism” edited by Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman⁴. The topic started drawing more and more interest and major works in the field started to be published in the second decade of the 21st century. In his *Transmesis*, Thomas Beebe introduced the concept of “transmesis” to explain the ways translation and translators feature in fiction. By using the metaphor of a “blackbox”, Beebe looks for clues about how aspects of the translation process are revealed in fiction by closely analyzing various literary works from around the world⁵. *Transfiction Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction*, edited by Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl⁶, consolidated various studies to highlight the diversity of fictional translator characters and the discourses surrounding translation, while Micheal Cronin’s *Translation Goes to the Movies* tackles the representation of translation and translators in film⁷.

A leading contribution to this area of study is Rosemary Arrojo’s *Fictional Translators: Rethinking Translation through Literature*⁸. Adopting fictional representations of translation and translators as a major component in her research trajectory since the 1990s, Arrojo’s book brings together her decades-long meditations on the issue and posits that examining translators in fiction can reveal novel insights into translation and translation theory as an asymmetrical interaction involving multiple languages, interests, and perspectives⁹. By analyzing seven different fictional works, Arrojo investigates the hierarchical dynamics between the original text and its translation, addressing issues such as the unavoidable visibility of the translator and the challenges in

³ Elsa Vieira, “(In)visibilities in Translation: Exchanging Theoretical and Fictional Perspectives,” *Contextos* 6, (1995), 50-68

⁴ Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman, “Fictionalising Translation and Multilingualism,” *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series – Themes in Translation Studies* 4 (2005): 11.

⁵ Thomas O. Beebe, *Transmesis: Inside Translation’s Black Box* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁶ Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl (eds), *Transfiction: Research into Realities of Translation Fiction*. (Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014).

⁷ Michael Cronin, *Translation Goes to the Movies*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁸ Rosemary Arrojo, *Fictional Translators: Rethinking Translation through Literature* (London & New York: Routledge, 2018).

⁹ Arrojo, *Fictional Translators: Rethinking Translation through Literature*, 1.

accurately conveying the source text's meaning¹⁰. More recently, Denise Krippler's *Narratives of Mistranslation: Fictional Translators in Latin American Literature* has further elucidated the evolving nature of fictional translators¹¹.

In Turkey, there has also been a growing interest in fictional representations of translators. The first academic study in the field to tackle translator characters in novels is A. Selin Erkul's "Discourse on Translators and Translation in Turkish Fiction," which closely analyzes a number of novels around the theme of identity and its links to translation in late Ottoman novels. Erkul concludes that these novels, authored by translators, provide insights into how translators perceive their own profession, exploring themes such as "in-between" positions, "mistranslation," and the "author-translator relationship"¹². Subsequent research has expanded and diversified the response to the increasing number of translator characters in Turkish fiction. Ayşe Ece's *Çevirmenin Yazar ve Kahraman Olarak Portresi* (The Portrait of the Translator as an Author and Protagonist)¹³ is the first manuscript published on the subject in Turkish and analyzes translator protagonists across Turkish, Peruvian, Irish, and British literature. Ece highlights how these protagonists often view translation as a pathway to authorship, suggesting that authorship and translation are intertwined forms of writing. Similarly, Tahsin Çulhaoğlu in "A Portrait of Translator-Author in Don Quixote" explores authorship, authenticity, and translation, arguing that Cervantes portrays writers and narrators as figures who rewrite and reinterpret existing texts, emphasizing the interpretative and creative aspects of translation¹⁴.

Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar applies Beebee's concept of "transmesism" to analyze pseudo-translation in Murat Gülsoy's *Gölgeler ve Hayaller Şehrinde* (2014) and its translator characters¹⁵. The concept of "transmesism" is also adopted by Sema Üstün Külünk who examines the novel *Mütercim* (2013) exploring the enigmatic translator character and its metaphorical implications within the early Republican context¹⁶. "Transmesism" was also used in the analysis of Selim İleri's

¹⁰ Min Gao, M. "Review of Fictional Translators: Rethinking Translation through Literature by Arrojo," *Transletters* 4 (2019) 387-393.

¹¹ Denise Krippler, *Fictional Translators in Latin American Literature*, (London and New York: Routledge 2023).

¹² Ahu Selin Erkul, "Discourses on Translation and Translators in Turkish Fiction," (Unpublished MA thesis, Dokuz Eylül University, İzmir, 2005), 14.

¹³ Ayşe Ece, *Çevirmenin Yazar ve Kahraman Olarak Portresi* (İstanbul: Çeviribilim, 2016).

¹⁴ Tahsin Çulhaoğlu, "Don Kişot'ta çevirmen yazarın portresi," *Adıyaman Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 9, no. 25 (2017): 1-19.

¹⁵ Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar, "Pseudotranslation as Passage into History: Murat Gülsoy's *Gölgeler ve Hayaller Şehrinde* as Transmesism," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 44, no. 4 (2017): 637-654.

¹⁶ Sema Üstün Külünk, "The novel *Mütercim* as a site of transfiction: A case of translation in life and the translation of life in the transformational republican era in Turkey," *The International Journal of Translation and Interpreting Studies* 15, no.1 (2023), 236-252.

novel *Kafes* (1987)¹⁷. Volga Gümüş Yılmaz (2018) assesses the perception of translators in three 21st century novels, finding that translation is generally secondary to authorship but acknowledges the translator's power to influence the text, while still being constrained by ethical and commitment issues. Sevinç Arı argues that the character of Raif Efendi in Sabahattin Ali's *Kürk Mantolu Madonna* (Madonna in a Fur Coat) (1943) critiques societal prejudices about translators by presenting characteristics that differ from those commonly perceived¹⁸. Nilgin Tanış Polat and Saniye Uysal Ünalın analyze the translator character in Alper Canıgüz's *Kan ve Gül* (2020), noting that the increased attention to the visibility and status of translators in contemporary studies has transformed them into symbols of modern existence¹⁹. Mehmet Büyüktuncay, in *Sırrı Çevirmenin Olanaksızlığı: Selim İleri Romanından Çeviriye Kurmaca ile Bakmak*, examines translator characters in Selim İleri's *Ölüm İlişkileri* (1979) and *Kafes* (1987), focusing on themes such as originality, creativity, sexual identity, and agency, and demonstrates how these translators navigate an ambiguous space between translation and original creation²⁰.

In her master's thesis, Cansu Canseven Efeler , analyzes translator characters in *Yer Çekimi* (2014), *Zafiyet Kuramı* (2007), and *Mütercim* and identifies a recurring power struggle involving various dynamics such as father-son and state-citizen relationships, suggesting that translators are often portrayed as victims within these conflicts²¹. She argues that these characters are depicted as introverts who struggle against authority and their struggle represents broader themes of suppression and exile. In addition to Canseven Efeler's thesis, N.Zeynep Kürük focused on women translators and how they were depicted²². Ümmügülsüm Albiz re-examined the book *Zafiyet Kuramı* in terms of translation ethics, focusing on the concept of mistranslation and falsification²³ (Albiz 2022). Translation and translators in science fiction films i.e., in the series of Star Wars

¹⁷ Hilal İzci and Selin Erkul Yağcı, "Çeviri ve Arada Kalmışlık Metaforu Olarak Kafes," *Çeviribilim ve Uygulamaları Dergisi* 34 (2023): 89-110.

¹⁸ Sevinç Arı, "Toplumsal yaşamda çevirmen algısı ve edebiyat metinlerine yansımaları: Tercüman Raif Efendi," *Çeviribilim ve Uygulamaları Dergisi* 30 (2021): 1-17.

¹⁹ Nilgün Tanış Polat and Saniye Uysal Ünalın. "Alper Canıgüz'ün Kan ve Gül Romanı Örneğinde Çevirmen ve Dünyası," *Folklor/Edebiyat* 27, no. 108 (2021): 1109-1126.

²⁰ Mehmet Büyüktuncay, *Sırrı çevirmenin olanaksızlığı: Selim İleri romanından çeviriye kurmaca ile bakmak*. (Saarbrücken: Lambert Publishing, 2020), 17.

²¹ Cansu Canseven Efeler, "In Pursuit of Power Relations: Fictional Translators in the Turkish Novels," (Unpublished MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, İstanbul, 2021.)

²² N. Zeynep Kürük 2020. "Tracing the Translator in Fiction: The Representation of Women and Translation in *Bir Tereddüdün Romanı*," José Santaemilia Ruiz (Coord.), *Feminismo(s) y/en traducción / Feminism(s) and/in translation*, (Madrid: Comares, 2020)

²³ Ümmügülsüm Albiz, "Kurmaca Dünyada Çevirmen ve Çeviri: Zafiyet Kuramı'nda Çeviri Etiği," *Kuram ve Uygulamalarla Çeviribilim*, (Çanakkale: Paradigma Publishing, 2022) 59-76.

were also studied recently²⁴. Aysun Kiran similarly discusses translation characters in Turkish war films²⁵.

As this brief overview demonstrates, recent studies on fictional translators have focused on issues such as identity, the author-translator relationship, and the secondary and liminal position of the translator, with some novels analyzed by multiple researchers from different perspectives. While some recent publications analyze translation and the translator as a symbol/metaphor, others establish more intimate links with real life. In this paper, we will set out to view representations of translators from both perspectives. We will explore madness as a psychological state that characterizes fictional translators and the way this state can be interpreted as a metaphoric reflection of the profession of translating and processes of translation.

Madness and/in Translators

Madness is a topic that is occasionally visited by translation scholars. The critical discussion around what madness means is a broad one and we do not intend to delve into it here. Suffice it to say we use the term madness to refer to various degrees of mental instability and episodes of psychosis, i.e. a detachment from reality. There are different approaches taken to madness in translation research. One particular angle is to view the process of translation itself as a form of madness, mostly in a metaphorical sense. Particularly challenging authors and works that are attributed degrees of “untranslatability” by the literary establishment become subjects of debate for translation scholars who question the very notion of untranslatability through them. In the special issue of *Translation Studies* on “Nonsense, Madness, and the Limits of Translation” Alexandra Lukes²⁶ discusses madness in how it involves its opposite, unreason, in the drive for sense-making and how madness is associated with aesthetics of discomfort and nonsense. In the same issue, David Scott assesses the degree of “madness” that is involved in attempting to translate one of Mallarmé’s sonnets²⁷. More common are references to real-life translators and authors who are mentally ill, a condition that affects their writing and translating. A well-known subject is Louis Wolfson, a schizophrenic individual, who refuses to speak in English, teaching himself various languages and devising a specific, yet unintelligible mode of translation²⁸. Hölderlin and his works

²⁴ Ayşe Şirin Okyayuz and Ahsen Ay, “Bilim Kurguda Çevirmen ve Çeviri Temsili: Uzay Yolu Örneği,” *Turkish Studies - Language and Literature* (2023)

²⁵ Aysun Kiran, “Transfiction in Turkish War Films: Turkish Ice Cream (2019) and Ayla: The Daughter of War (2017),” *Contemporary Translation Studies: Bridging Culture, Technologies and Societies* (Istanbul: Çizgi Kitabevi Publishing 2023) 11-23.

²⁶ Alexandra Lukes, “An Aesthetics of Discomfort: Nonsense, Madness, and the Limits of Translation,” *Translation Studies* 12, no. 1 (2019): 1-14.

²⁷ David Scott, The Madness of Translating Mallarmé,” *Translation Studies* 12, no. 1 (2019): 36-46.

²⁸ Jean-Jacques Lecercle. “Louis Wolfson and the Philosophy of Translation,” *Oxford Literary Review* 11, no. 1/2 (1989): 103-120.

have also been discussed in the context of his mental illness by various scholars, among others, by Walter Benjamin in his famous essay, the “Translator’s Task” where he writes “The Sophocles translations were Hölderlin’s last work. In them the sense plunges from abyss to abyss until it threatens to become lost in the bottomless depths of language”²⁹. Crowned as an exemplary “mad poet”³⁰ Hölderlin’s last translations create a “linguistic battlefield” and generate “barely intelligible images”³¹. Antonin Artaud, another author-translator who attracted attention from translation scholars, was equally affected by his mental ailments, receiving variable diagnoses throughout his short life. Anne Tomiche describes how he was initially instructed to translate by his psychiatrist as a form of art therapy in order to silence his screams and then turned to translation as a form of poetic practice described as “glossolalic writing – combinations of sounds without apparent meaning”³².

As these references illustrate, madness is a familiar theme and familiar state in translation studies. In terms of the fictional representations of translators, madness is also a recurrent characteristic and is often used as a metaphor for a wide range of conditions. To offer a few examples, one of the earliest and best-known translators of the fictional world is Gallus, a kleptomaniac, created by the Hungarian author Deszö Kosztolányi in his novel *Kornél Esti* published originally in 1933³³. Julio Cortazar’s translator in his short story “Letter to a Young Lady in Paris” straddles the thin line between fantasy and reality and has hallucinations about throwing up bunnies³⁴. Samar, Leila Aboulela’s protagonist and translator character in *The Translator*, suffers from depression caused by trauma and displacement³⁵.

Fictional representations of translators and interpreters in Turkish literature follow a similar path, and in fact, we argue that madness and mental weakness are even more pronounced aspects of translator characters in Turkish works. In the novels, fictional translators, who mostly aspire to be writers, achieve little success and grapple with feelings of failure and detachment from reality. We claim that this sense of disconnection is further accentuated through metalepsis. Metalepsis, as defined by Gérard Genette, is a narrative device and involves the violation of narrative levels, specifically the intrusion of one diegesis (the fictional world in which events occur) into another³⁶. This phenomenon may manifest as the sudden appearance of an extradiegetic narrator within the diegetic realm, intertwining different narrative layers. Different kinds of metalepsis are commonly

²⁹ Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” John Biguenet & Rainer Schulte (eds.), *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays From Dryden to Derrida*. (University of Chicago Press, 2012) 71-82.

³⁰ Silke-Maria Weineck, “The Abyss Above: Philosophy, Tragedy, and Madness in Hölderlin’s Encounter with Sophocles,” *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 36, no. 2 (2000): 161.

³¹ Weineck, “The Abyss Above: Philosophy, Tragedy, and Madness in Hölderlin’s Encounter with Sophocles,” 166.

³² Anne Tomiche, “Artaud, Madness and/in Translation,” *Translation Studies* 12, no. 1 (2019): 24-35.

³³ Deszö Kosztolányi, *Kornél Esti* (trans. by Bernard Adams), (New York: New Directions 2021).

³⁴ Julio Cortázar, “Letter to a Young Lady in Paris,” *Blow-up and Other Stories*, (trans. by Paul Blackburn). (New York: Pantheon, 1967) 39-50.

³⁵ Leila Aboulela, *The Translator*. (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1999)

³⁶ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*. (trans. by Jane E. Lewin), (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980)

employed in both post-Tanzimat novels and contemporary fiction making boundaries between reality, fantasy, fiction, translation, and original works more and more blurred.

Westernization and the Ottoman Novel

Although novels with translator characters and research on this subject have been increasing in Turkey mostly since the 2000s, translator characters have been present in Turkish literature since the inception of the novel genre in the 19th century. The introduction of the novel as a genre in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was part of the major literary innovations that constituted a significant phase of the cultural and institutional transformations of the Ottoman Empire. This challenging phase, which was stimulated by increased translation activity, can also be characterized by educational reforms, the rise of a new type of intelligentsia to inform the Turkish reading public about the principles of government and material progress of Western nations, and the establishment of mass media in the form of privately owned newspapers in Turkey³⁷. In this context, a discussion of the image and status of translators in Turkish society cannot be isolated from the Turkish novel, which is presumably involved in the social, intellectual and even political milieu.

Unlike the gradual development of the novel in the West under historical, social and economic conditions during the transition from feudalism to capitalism and the birth of the bourgeoisie along with the development of individualism, the Ottoman novel emerged quickly out of different conditions. Its origins lie in translations and imitations of the Western novel as part of Ottoman Westernisation³⁸. The translator-authors of the period were alerted by the growing public interest in translations of European novels; the publication of fiction, specifically translated popular fiction, was a way of attracting a new readership, especially among the middle class. In the meantime, the novel was also an advantageous vehicle through which ideas could be transmitted to a wider audience. In the 1860s, when a series of translations (poetry and prose) and private newspapers appeared, Ottoman reformism was no longer confined to high-level administrative decisions, but was explained to the reading public mainly through the press, which was dominated by the new intelligentsia. Yusuf Kamil Pařa's translation of F n lon's *T l maque* in 1862 is considered the first translation of an example of Western fiction into Turkish³⁹. This translation was one of the first works to make the Tanzimat intelligentsia aware of the qualities of Western fiction. A broader concept of the European novel emerged as a result of other translations

³⁷ İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Y zyılı*. (Istanbul: İletişim Publishing, 2003) 196-243.

³⁸ Berna Moran, *T rk Romanına Eleştirel bir Bakış I*. (Istanbul: İletişim Publishing, 2000)

³⁹ Saliha Paker, "Tanzimat D neminde Avrupa Edebiyatından  eviriler:  ođul-Dizge Kuramı Aısından Bir Deđerlendirme," (trans. by Ali T kel). *Metis  eviri* (1987), 131-43.

after 1862. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *Ondokuzuncu Asır* (The Nineteenth Century)⁴⁰ is a good source for a panorama of the translation activity of the period. In 1862, an abbreviated version of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* was published in a newspaper. *Robinson Crusoe* was translated by the imperial chronicler Lütfi, curiously from Arabic, and published as a book in 1864. At the end of the decade, translation activity was stimulated by a younger group of writers who gathered around newly established newspapers and magazines. The serialization of Chateaubriand's *Atala* in 1869, followed by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* in 1870 and Dumas père's *Monte Cristo* the following year, reflected the growing romantic tendencies of this younger group, which included Sami Paşazade Sezai and Recaizade Ekrem.

At first glance, the above list may seem to show a decline in taste following Yusuf Kamil Paşa's idealism in translating canonised literature, but it accurately reflects the formation of ideas, expectations and attitudes towards the novel. At the same time, it conveys the effects of the rise of commercial publishing and proposals for a new understanding of fiction. The publication of adventure and mystery novels such as those by Defoe, Dumas, Radcliffe and Montepin, regardless of genre and literary merit, is an indicator of an established audience for popular fiction and of assured commercial success. These publications also helped to widen the audience and create the habit of reading for pleasure among the middle classes.

The vague term 'men of letters' best describes the members of this new intelligentsia. They translated, wrote and published newspapers; for them, writing was a means of social mobilisation. Since they knew Europe and admired its material progress, scientific achievements and intellectual developments, their literary endeavours were part of their activities as idealists and reformers, and they tried to use literature (translation and original writing) to convey ideas. They often insisted on the didactic value of literature. Thus, it can be argued that the introduction of both translation from Western languages and the novel in Turkey was driven by three main concerns of the intelligentsia: firstly, their desire to spread their ideas to a wider audience; secondly, their willingness to draw the public's attention to current issues; and finally, their aim to borrow from Europe those institutions that were worthy of adoption. In short, the men of letters of the period were involved in the activity of translation, imitation and adaptation, as well as original writing, in order to create alternatives for a more civilized society.

These early Turkish novels in general reflect a wide range of contemporary attitudes towards Westernisation, while at the same time conveying the obsession of intellectuals with issues of social change. On the one hand, as a genre translated/imported from the West, the novel was ironically used as a means of documenting the undesirable aspects of Western influence on Turkish society; on the other hand, it was used as a means of disseminating a Westernist outlook⁴¹. Most of the novels of the 1870s and 1890s can be read as an inventory of facts and opinions, as the

⁴⁰ Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *On Dokuzuncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2012), 356-371.

⁴¹ Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanın Epistemolojik Temelleri*. (Istanbul: İletişim Publishing, 1993) 79-129.

novelists responded to certain socio-economic trends and in many cases, proposed an alternative to what they perceived as decadence. The foppery of certain middle classes and their pretentious imitation of a European lifestyle became a central concern of the novel. The parvenu (dandy) emerged as a representative type, embodying the negative aspects of Western influence and exemplifying the misguided notions of Westernisation, but he was relentlessly caricatured and exaggerated beyond all measure. Although placed in a farcical context, the dandy was used to express serious criticism of irresponsible economic behaviour, vanity and ignorance among certain upper classes of the Tanzimat period. At the same time, another type appeared in the didactic novels, which showed certain characteristics of bourgeois attitudes as well as a basic puritanism related to Turkish and Islamic values. It could be said that such fictional characters were representative types of Turkish society, illustrating both the negative and positive effects of Westernisation.

Translators in the Early Ottoman Novels

Four novels from this period are chosen to be examined in this article: *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* (first published in 1875) by Ahmet Midhat⁴², *Turfanda mı Turfa mı?* (The Early or the Spoiled Seed) (first published in 1891) by Mizancı Mehmed Murad⁴³, *Araba Sevdası* (A Fondness for Carriages) (first published in 1896) by Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem (Ekrem)⁴⁴, *Mai ve Siyah* (The Blue and Black) (first published in 1897) by Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil⁴⁵ share these recurring patterns and fictional types, providing a narrative that is a colourful reflection of the era. Taken individually, however, the novels also reveal the diversity of discourses on translators and translation.

The authors of these novels - Ahmet Mithat Efendi, Mehmet Murat, Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem and Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil - were not only writers but also translators and cultural figures who had a significant impact on Turkish intellectual, literary, cultural and political life. Their ideologies, attitudes and personal experiences are reflected in their works. For example, many critics and scholars see Rakım as an autobiographical representation of Ahmet Mithat, reflecting his own experiences as a self-made scholar, journalist and translator (Moran 2000). This identification is also evident in Ahmet Mithat's novel *Müşahedat* (1891) (Observations), where he refers to himself in conversations with fictional characters. Similarly, Mehmet Murat's *Turfanda mı Turfa mı?* is often seen as a commentary on the social and political conditions of late 19th century Turkey, reflecting aspects of Murat's own life. Mehmet Murat later noted that the sections describing Mansur's life in Istanbul were autobiographical⁴⁶, and he even signed some letters from

⁴² Ahmet Mithat, *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*. (Istanbul, İletişim Publishing, 2018)

⁴³ Mizancı Murad, *Turfanda mı Turfa mı?* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Publishing, 2019)

⁴⁴ Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem, *Araba Sevdası*. (Istanbul: Can Publishing, 2019)

⁴⁵ Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, *Mai ve Siyah*. (Istanbul, Can Publishing, 2016)

⁴⁶ Robert P. Finn, *The Early Turkish Novel* (Istanbul: Isis Publishing, 1984) 73.

Paris as Mansur. Rezaizade Ekrem appears in his novel as the translator of French works (such as *Atala* and *Paul and Virginie*) read by the character Bihruz. Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, in his memoir *Kırk Yıl* (Forty Years), recounts the creation of *Mai ve Siyah*⁴⁷ and it is clear that Ahmet Cemil, a typical Servet-i Fünun translator-poet-writer, partly represents Halit Ziya's dreams and difficulties. The common features of these novels, their links to real-life situations and their biographical elements, combined with the claim that novels serve as metatexts reflecting the image and status of translators, provide important insights into both the self-perception of translators and the broader social view of the profession.

Another striking pattern among the characters in these novels is that all the protagonists - Felatun, Rakım, Mansur, Bihruz and Ahmet Cemil - are young orphans who have lost their fathers. Jale Parla interprets this recurring theme of orphanhood as symbolic of the post-Tanzimat youth who had lost faith in the Ottoman Empire and its sultan (father)⁴⁸. This motif reinforces the broader theme of character types in Turkish novels. Thus, a comparative analysis of these novels, which share many similarities, is relevant to the study of translators and translations and provides valuable insights into the status and perception of translators within the Turkish literary field.

As these early Turkish novels largely reflect contemporary attitudes toward westernization, the authors usually scrutinize the superficial imitation of European lifestyles while praising characters who successfully create a balanced lifestyle. Two protagonists in these four novels are especially represented as ideal characters and agents of change: Rakım and Mansur. They are set apart by their translation skills and personal outlook on life. Interestingly, they are both autobiographical. The rest is marked by mistranslations, misunderstandings, illusions and delusions. In Ahmet Mithat's *Felatun Bey*, Rezaizade Mahmud Ekrem's *Bihruz* and Halit Ziya's *Ahmet Cemil*, there exists a fervent desire to write and to succeed. Yet for them, madness or disillusionment signifies an indirect form of death by becoming disconnected from consciousness. The stream-of-consciousness technique employed in *Araba Sevdası*, illustrates the fragmented nature of the subject, gradually pushing it toward a state of imagined delirium, ultimately culminating in a confrontation with consciousness⁴⁹.

In all these narratives, we read accounts of subjects teetering on the brink of madness and metalepsis is used to disorient the storyline and highlight the protagonists' instability and delusions. Ahmet Mithat Efendi, famous for his rhetorical interventions to the narrative, where the narrator frequently interrupts the diegetic events to engage directly with the reader, opens the novel by asking the readers if they know Felatun Bey. The phrase "Ey Kari" (O reader), closely associated with Ahmet Mithat Efendi, best exemplifies this rhetorical strategy. Such interventions consistently position the reader within the narrative, creating an implied reader as an interlocutor and providing explanations. Rhetorical metalepsis allows the narrator to emerge from the fictional world and articulate personal viewpoints. The fact that Rakım, who also has a happy home life, is

⁴⁷ Finn, *The Early Turkish Novel*, 152-153.

⁴⁸ Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar*, 76-83.

⁴⁹ Jale Parla, *Don Kişot'tan Bugüne Roman*. (Istanbul: İletişim Publishing, 2003)

successful both in his private life and in his work is appreciated and, whereas Felatun loses both his wealth and his reputation while going after idle pursuits is sometimes exaggerated to show the difference between the two protagonists. Felatun, who is sometimes seen as a fool and sometimes as a madman by those around him due to his exaggerated and excessive behaviour, constantly puts himself in ridiculous situations.

Although not always as overtly utilized as by Ahmet Mithat Efendi, omniscient narrators in Tanzimat literature often pause the narrative to inject their own perspectives. These narrative interventions become particularly pronounced at moments when protagonists' aspirations remain unfulfilled, leading to a disconnect from reality. *Mai ve Siyah* by Halit Ziya Uřaklıgil serves as an exemplary case. Regarded as a masterpiece in Turkish literature and technically recognized as an early example of the contemporary novel in a Western sense, it employs a dominant narrative perspective. The narrator, aiming to direct the reader's attention to forthcoming events, frequently disrupts the narrative flow to offer clarifications. In striving for realism, the narrator provides detailed insights into the characters' backgrounds and the environments that shape them, elucidating the factors that contribute to the novel's outcomes. To enhance psychological depth, the narrator also elaborates on the psychology and delusions of Ahmet Cemil and the way his friends and family sees him.

In *Araba Sevdası*, the narrators intermingle or replace one another, transforming the narrative into a multifaceted exploration of voices. Novelistic techniques such as dialogue, letters, and stream of consciousness extend their boundaries to fulfill the role of narrators⁵⁰. In several instances, the "implied author," embodies a second self through which the real author creates distinct identities and narrators. An illustrative example can be seen in a passage where Bihruz Bey observes, "How quickly time passes when one is heureux!" (İnsan öre olunca vakit nasıl hızlı geiyor) This linguistic imitation (the narrator imitating Bihruz who often speaks a hybrid language consisting of words and sentences in French) reflects the narrator's alignment with Bihruz's sentiments, sometimes mocking, at other times genuinely sympathetic. The extensive use of transcribed French phrases and terms in *Araba Sevdası* reinforces the impact of these authorial interventions and instances of metalepsis.

In *Turfanda Mı Yoksa Turfa Mı?*, characterized as a "national novel," Mizancı Murat creates a set of characters that reflect the moral values, traits, and worldview of Ottoman Muslim society, positioning them as role models for future generations. The protagonist, Mansur, closely resembles Mizancı Murat in terms of ideology, character, and environment, with the author frequently inserting his own viewpoints into the narrative. This idealization and integration of personal ideas disrupt the fictional nature of the story, leading readers to perceive it more as didactic literature than as a work of fiction. Furthermore, Mansur's death at the conclusion of the novel, while valiantly defending his homeland, alongside his persistent critique of extreme and marginal

⁵⁰ Parla, *Don Kiřot'tan Bugüne Roman*.

behaviors, serves as an expression of the author's and protagonist's disillusionment and disappointment.

Translators in 21st century fiction

Our paper now turns to the 21st century with a particular focus on madness and psychosis as they are incorporated into the translator characters' life experiences. The early examples from Ottoman fiction scrutinized above make use of metalepsis moving the reader across different diegetic realms and create translator characters that find themselves in disillusionment and frustration, mostly as a symbol of the state of the Ottoman society, going through a virtual socio-political collapse stuck within a West - East divide. As we jump across a century and look at contemporary works of fiction and their treatment of translator characters, we realize that their forms of madness are more acute, more pronounced and appear to play a key role in the narrative structure of the novels. In contrast to the didactic characters found in 19th-century socially critical novels, contemporary literature lacks idealized representations of successful translators. Instead of the overly westernized, idle, and caricaturized half-heroes of the past, modern translators are depicted as individuals preoccupied with more profound personal conflicts, identity issues and mental problems. The works to be discussed from this perspective are Yekta Kopan's short story "Sarmaşık" from his collection *Bir de Baktım Yoksun* (2009)⁵¹ Murat Gülsoy's *Gölgeler ve Hayaller Şehrinde* (2014)⁵², and Enis Batur and Yiğit Bener's semi-fictional text – *Simültane Cinnet* (2015)⁵³.

"Sarmaşık" by Yekta Kopan - loss and pursuit leading to madness

In "Sarmaşık" (The Creeping Ivy), Kopan (2009) tells the story of a failed author-translator who is portrayed as a loser, suffering from the emotional trauma of the loss of his father and the pending divorce from his wife Melek. His character is not far from some of the Ottoman translator characters, he is a half-hero, showing weakness, suffering under the shadow of a dead father and lacking in virility. The story is told from the point of view of the nameless protagonist, who goes looking for the neighbourhood cat when he cannot find it one morning. His search leads him into the backyard of a derelict house where, instead of the cat, he encounters his deceased father. This is a story about loss and pursuit, with the cat standing for all the narrator's losses in life, including his childhood, his father, his wife, and his hopes to become an author. Like the early Ottoman

⁵¹ Yekta Kopan, "Sarmaşık," *Bir de Baktım Yoksun*. (Istanbul: Can Publishing, 2009)

⁵² Murat Gülsoy, *Gölgeler ve Hayaller Şehrinde*. (Istanbul: Can Publishing, 2014)

⁵³ Enis Batur and Yiğit Bener, *Simültane Cinnet*. (Istanbul: Sel Publishing, 2015)

works, the will to write and to become an author is a prominent theme in the story. The narrator works at a publishing house as a translator where he is clearly not popular and is given employment as a favour to his father who was himself an author that lost popularity in his later years. Rather than being a defining character trait, translatorship is used to describe the secondariness of the narrator, to nearly everything in life, but mainly to his father and his wife. There are two references to his job as a translator, yet they are equally crucial for the narrative – the first one reveals the narrator’s job in a quote by his publisher boss who says

Evde rahat rahat alıřmak dururken buraya niye geliyorsun anlamıyorum ki, otur masana, koy ayını-kahveni, yap evirini,” derdi Faruk. (Faruk would say, I don’t understand why you come here when you can comfortably work at home; sit at your desk, pour yourself tea or coffee and do your translation.)⁵⁴

Apart from revealing his job at the publishing house, the quote also implies that he is not really welcome at the office. The second reference is a clue about the mental state of the narrator after he meets his late father sitting on a bench in the backyard. The narrator is surprised at himself for accepting their encounter so easily:

Durumun tuhaflıđını sorgulamayacaktım artık. Hem ne vardı bunda, daha geen hafta evirisini yaptığım kitabın bir sayfasında kaybolduđumu grdüğüm rüyanın da gerek olduđunu düşünmemiş miydim? (I was no longer going to question the strangeness of the situation. And what was the big deal, didn’t I think that the dream I had last week about getting lost in a page of the book I was translating was real?)⁵⁵.

The quote proves further evidence of the fragility of the narrator’s mind, which, by that point in the story, is already clear. His father is a strong and demeaning character. Always a naïve and vulnerable person, the narrator remembers the fantastic stories his father used to tell him about the disappearance of the ominous house and about the wall inside their home, supposedly with a secret passage. The narrator admits that as a child, he believed those stories. Once their conversation with his father ends, the narrator returns home and starts consuming alcohol while working unsuccessfully on his own short story. He interprets his meeting with his father as yet another dream with a clear “psychological explanation” that led him through the “labyrinths of his mind”⁵⁶. Later that night, the cat appears in the flat, marking the moment the narrator begins to doubt his sanity. He says to himself,

Belki de deliriyordum, belki de hayal dünyam süngerin suyu emmesi gibi emiyordu içimde kalan son gerekliđi. Belki de zayıflığım yiyip bitirecekti beni. (Maybe I was going crazy, maybe my imagination was sucking up the last bit of reality inside me like a sponge sucks up water. Maybe my weakness was going to destroy me.)⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Kopan, “Sarmařık” 3-4.

⁵⁵ Kopan, “Sarmařık” 9.

⁵⁶ Kopan, “Sarmařık” 25.

⁵⁷ Kopan, “Sarmařık” 27.

The cat takes a big leap and flies through the wall of the flat, at which point the narrator realizes that he has passed the threshold. Giving up on reality, he ends the story with a short sentence: “Duvardaki geçit beni bekliyordu, biliyordum.” (The passage on the wall was waiting for me, I knew)⁵⁸. The psychosis of the narrator can be interpreted as a general state of mind representing the weakness and vulnerability of the translator character. Failing to become an author, like nearly all fictional translators, he is relegated to working as a translator. He is not particularly successful in or passionate about translation and his work is not appreciated. His wish to escape the real world is complemented by his pursuit of things that are lost to him. He does not go to work and instead withdraws into his own world where he is able to recoup his past losses in the labyrinths of his mind.

Gölgeler ve Hayaller Şehrinde by Murat Gülsoy - Madness begetting madness

In this award-winning epistolary novel, Gülsoy narrates the identity crisis of a young man, whose cultural and mental liminality is presented against the backdrop of the modernization pangs of the Ottoman Empire, signalling that the Ottoman discourses on translation and translator characters are still present. Gülsoy has chosen one year from the summer of 1908 to the summer of 1909 as the temporal setting of the novel. This is an important period for Ottoman politics and society as it involved the reinstatement of the constitutional monarchy in the country and a series of violent events that ensued. The protagonist is Fuat Franck Chausson, a French-Turkish translator, interpreter and journalist. A fictional character, he is associated with a real-life figure, the Ottoman intellectual Beşir Fuat (1852-1887), who famously killed himself as part of an experiment he conducted on himself. In the novel, Fuat is introduced as Beşir Fuat’s son with a French woman. Estranged from his father’s hometown for most of his life, Fuat is dispatched to Istanbul by a newspaper to report the political events in the country. In Istanbul, a series of encounters lead to the unraveling of Fuat’s father’s identity and his relationship to his mother, which brings on Fuat’s gradual mental decline through his year in the city. The novel is crafted by using various metalepsis strategies that create multiple narrators and multiple perspectives, leading to a fragmented reading experience. The playful tension between fiction and history owes much to metalepsis, which is sustained through the frame story, presenting the novel as a translation through an imaginary translator’s preface, a fictive translator’s and publisher’s footnotes, and a wide range of linguistic devices analyzed as parts of the novel’s transmesis in Tahir Gürçağlar⁵⁹.

Most of the male characters in the novel are translators, including the unreliable implied translator and narrator M.F.A., Fuat, and his best friend Alex to whom Fuat’s letters are addressed. Fuat is a translator on multiple levels; he works as an interpreter for Charles as they try to write a

⁵⁸ Kopan, “Sarmaşık” 27.

⁵⁹ Tahir Gürçağlar, “Pseudotranslation as Passage into History: Murat Gülsoy’s *Gölgeler ve Hayaller Şehrinde* as Transmesis,”

book on Istanbul together. On a deeper level, he is a cultural translator who translates Istanbul to his foreign friends and similarly, a cultural mediator in his work as a journalist relaying and making sense of the events in the Ottoman capital for the French readers of the newspaper. Like other translator characters tackled in this paper, Fuat is a failure. He withdraws and blocks communication as he walks in his path towards insanity.

The tropes of madness and translation are central to *Gölgeler ve Hayaller Şehrinde*. The novel is the product of Gülsoy's personal interest in and curiosity about Beşir Fuat, which is partly due to Beşir Fuat's relationship to sanity. Beşir Fuat's mother became insane and was committed to an asylum which caused her son to live with the fear of turning insane as he was told that his mother's illness could be hereditary. His suicide may also be considered a manifestation of his potential insanity, as he planned and executed it with great care. Beşir Fuat's fictional son Fuat is troubled by the same fears as his father and observes his own slide towards madness. We read his contemplation on whether he inherited mental illness from his father as he expresses "a new fear" settling in him: "Delirme korkusunun! Belki benim de içimde o korkunç delilik tohumu vardı, filizleneceği günü bekliyordu sence." (The fear of going mad! Maybe I too had that terrible seed of madness inside me, waiting insidiously for the day when it would flourish)⁶⁰. The fear of madness gradually takes over Fuat's discourse in his letters. Throughout the letters he mentions the noun "delilik" (madness/insanity) 15 times, and verbs "delirmek" and "çıldırılmak" (to go mad/insane) 32 times. He describes various dreams and fantasies that indicate his mental instability. While the reader is convinced that he becomes insane, Fuat resists madness in his writing: "Hayır, delirmedim Alex. Delilik değil bu Alex, başka bir şey. Yarı deli, yarı akıllı, yarı batılı yarı doğulu. Melez bir zihnin hayalleri..." (No, I have not gone mad Alex. This is not insanity Alex, this is something else. Half mad, half sane, half western half eastern. The dreams of a hybrid mind...) ⁶¹. Yet the reader understands that Fuat has succumbed to madness through instances of metalepsis created by Gülsoy that help reveal, yet also sustain the tension about the character's end. One translator's footnote reports that the letters become irregular and illegible and Fuat starts drawing pictures in his notes⁶². Just like Wolfson, Artaud or Hölderlin, Fuat withdraws into his own world and is no longer interested in making sense as an act of communication with the outside world. His only interlocutor is Alex, who has died from tuberculosis. Fuat writes, "Çoktan ölmüş olduğunu aklıma getirmemeye çalışıyorum. Yoksa yazamam. Yazamazsam iyice çıldıracağımı biliyorum" (I try not to think that you are long dead. Or else I cannot write. I know that if I don't write, I will go properly mad.)⁶³. Notice the clear intertextual nod to Sait Faik, who claimed he would have gone mad if he had not written.

⁶⁰ Gülsoy, *Gölgeler ve Hayaller Şehrinde*, 254.

⁶¹ Gülsoy, *Gölgeler ve Hayaller Şehrinde*, 284.

⁶² Gülsoy, *Gölgeler ve Hayaller Şehrinde*, 269.

⁶³ Gülsoy, *Gölgeler ve Hayaller Şehrinde*, 299.

Simültane Cinnet (Simultaneous Frenzy) by Enis Batur and Yiğit Bener - Madness and empowerment

This 2015 book by two famous figures of Turkish literature, Enis Batur and Yiğit Bener is an experimental text that does not follow a conventional narrative line. It is composed of four sections, the first and third by Enis Batur and the second and fourth by Yiğit Bener. It employs metalepsis throughout all of these texts as the narrative changes perspectives and narrators. The first section titled S.T. (an acronym for simultaneous interpreter in Turkish) opens the book and establishes the frame narrative. It is written by Enis Batur who offers his musings on the limits of language and interpretation as well as telling the background of a short story idea about a conference interpreter which he intended to write but since, has abandoned. The conference interpreter in question interprets for high level state meetings and driven crazy by his search for absolute correspondences in language, he breaks down during a conference and hijacks the podium with his own speech. Batur describes this situation as “şakilden inhiraf” (deviation from the plumb)⁶⁴. The second section is written by Bener with the title “Buyurun bir de buradan yakın” (Lo and behold!). This is the longest section in the book and is written in response to Batur’s idea of the short story. Bener narrates this section from the perspective of the conference interpreter, a profession he performs in real life. This section takes place in the psychiatric hospital, following the psychosis that brought the interpreter there. The conference interpreter is paid a visit by the author in the first section who would like to interview him for the story he plans to write. The author, who addresses the readers in essay style, only relaying the idea of the story, instead of the story itself in the first section, turns into a silent fictional character in the second section. The interpreter tells him his experiences as a professional interpreter, responding to the first section and creating a semi-autobiographical framework. The third section is a letter titled “Duo simultaneo para dos locos” written by Bener, this time using a psychiatrist as the narrator, who encounters two people as patients in his hospital in Buenos Aires whose language he is not able to understand. The letter details the strange behaviour of the patients, an author and a translator, who are apparently Batur and Bener, based on the physical descriptions. Finally, the fourth section “Sic Semper Tyrannis ya da Böyle Şeyler” (Sic Semper Tyrannis or Things Like That) is written by Batur as a fictional text that also has links to a real life person - Thamsanqa Jantjie, the sign language interpreter who experienced a mental collapse during Mandela’s memorial in front of world leaders. This final text offers the perspective of one of the patients in the third section and narrates the adventure of the fictional Batur and Bener, as they try to flee the Interpol. As this brief summary illustrates, the book is a gold mine for researchers studying representations of translators and interpreters. It offers a wide range of ideas and metaphors on multiple aspects of translation, among which madness has the leading role. Madness features in all four sections and two of them directly take place in a psychiatric hospital. The text presents translation/interpreting as forms of madness, engaging with language, meaning,

⁶⁴ Batur and Bener, *Simültane Cinnet*, 17.

and social representation in association with acts of “deviation”. It certainly deserves its own study and an exclusive analysis of how it tackles and lays bare the links between language, identity and psychosis.

A lecture given by Bener on the subject of this book to a group of undergraduate students at Boğaziçi University provides valuable insights into why madness is such a prominent theme in the book⁶⁵. In the lecture, Bener referred to conference interpretation as an inherently schizophrenic experience and argued that identification with the speaker required the effacement of the interpreter’s own existence. Furthermore, according to Bener, the basic conditions of the job of conference interpretation are enough to turn interpreters crazy; the general indifference of the employers to the human needs of the interpreters, the challenge of interpreting difficult texts and speakers who are not collaborative, the paranoia of performing in front of colleagues, who may, at any time, judge you about your performance, serving others at the expense of forgetting one’s own existence and the obligation to serve people with whom you may not necessarily want to associate yourself with carry the risk of creating a rift in one’s personality. As a translator, interpreter and author, Bener offers a very strong internal and external view of translation as a mentally challenging job. *Simültane Cinnet* is an extremely rich text in terms of its narrative style, devices of metalepsis, shifts in perspective and the way in which it blends fact, fiction and autobiography. The madness that is represented in this text is different from other texts taken up in this article. For Batur and Bener, madness is empowering and allows the interpreter to speak their mind and act in ways that may not be acceptable by social standards, but are nevertheless mentally liberating. While the nameless translator in “Sarmaşık” has next to no power in life or in his profession and while Gülsoy’s Fuat is increasingly physically and mentally vulnerable as he gradually slips into madness, Batur and Bener position the mad interpreter character as the origin of the narrative. For the two authors, madness is the beginning and not the end; it is the natural condition of interpreting, almost an inevitable point of departure if you want to grab control of language.

Conclusion

Our study has illustrated that the representation of fictional translators has remained mostly consistent, despite the evolution and transformation observed from the earliest examples of the novel genre to contemporary 21st-century literature. In the 19th century, translator characters were primarily characterized through binary oppositions, often meeting tragic fates such as death, departure from Istanbul to small provinces, or, as exemplified by the character Bihruz, succumbing to a deep depression. These trajectories reflect their responses to the complexities of their translation and writing careers, marked by failure, as well as the disappointments and delusions

⁶⁵ Yiğit Bener, “Simültane Cinnet,” Lecture given at the course TR 494.01 “Translation and Fiction,” Department of Translation and Interpreting Studies, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 19 July 2019.

experienced in their personal lives and professional endeavors. The translator/interpreter characters of the 21st century are no different. Authors continue to tackle identity issues and use translation as a metaphor for personal dissatisfaction and mental instability. The tension between translatorship and authorship is still present, particularly in Kopan and Glsoy's works. Both of these works further retain the notorious fatherlessness trope, showing how little views on translators have changed. This is a point of divergence for *Simltane Cınnet*, which is authored collaboratively by an author/editor and an author/translator. The interpreter character in this book has failed in the biggest way possible but is not a failure. His madness is presented as a source of power that has enabled him to disrupt the flow of international affairs. Unlike the other half-heroes, the interpreter of *Simltane Cınnet* is a full hero, he is empowered and uses his madness as a form of wisdom. This representation may be signaling a shift in the direction writers take while describing translation and translators in their fiction.

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