

## A New (Mis)Conception in the Face of the (Un)Translatable: 'Terscüme'

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The purpose of this article is to examine the concept of '*terscüme*,' a notion recently introduced to the Turkish literary system through the translation of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, with a focus on the translator's possible reasons or motives for coining the term. Seventy-seven years after the novel's completion by Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* was translated into Turkish twice in 2016, despite lingering doubts and controversy regarding its translatability. Interestingly enough, the first translation titled *Finneganın Vahı* was released as a '*terscüme*,' a word derived from the Turkish word *tercüme* (translation). Having certain negative implications for the work as a translation, '*terscüme*' could be translated into English as 'counter-translation,' 'inverse translation,' or 'contrary translation,' among other possibilities. In addition, the translator intentionally presents himself as a 'Turkicizer,' as opposed to a 'translator.' In order to discover the translator's reasons for placing a seemingly negative cast on the 'translation' of this so-called 'untranslatable' work, this article considers paratextual elements (Genette 1997) as a research tool and supports them with textual elements. This study argues that what gave rise to the concept of '*terscüme*' could be the translator's reticence to assume the essentialist responsibility that would be imposed on a work called a 'translation' and designated by the name 'translator.' The study concludes that the essentialist perspective on translation may cause the translator to avoid that title and seek to attain visibility under different names for himself/herself and his/her work.

Keywords: *terscüme*; untranslatability; translator's invisibility; essentialism; *Finnegans Wake*

### 1. Introduction

*Finnegans Wake*, James Joyce's 'book of the dark,' has only been translated into 11 languages, including Turkish thus far. Turkish had to wait for 77 years to have a translation of *Finnegans Wake*, which Joyce completed in 1939 after 17 years during which it was serialized as a 'work in progress' in several magazines including the *Transatlantic Review* and the *Transition*. Remarkably, the two Turkish translations, *Finneganın Vahı* (Finnegan's sigh) by Umur Çelikyay and *Finnegan Uyanması* (Finnegan waking) by Fuat Sevimay, were released in the same year (2016) by Aylak Adam and Sel, respectively. While Sevimay's translation

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was a complete translation, Aylak Adam published the first two volumes of Çelikyay’s translation in 2016 and 2017, with the third volume still in progress.

The lengthy time lapse between the English publication and Turkish translation probably resulted from the unconventional composition of *Finnegans Wake*, which caused it to be perceived as difficult or even impossible to translate. In this regard, it may be useful to mention how *Finnegans Wake* is more broadly regarded in terms of readability, intelligibility, and translatability.

Among many others, Jorge Louis Borges refers to *Finnegans Wake* as untranslatable and even illegible (Waisman 2005, 193). With its wide range of broken grammatical structures, new coinages involving roots and affixes from different languages, and a mix of languages as well as puns, wordplays, and references to sacred books, mythology, history, contemporary literature, and Joyce’s own works, *Finnegans Wake* is a text which “like poetry, uses words and images which can mean several, often contradictory, things at once” (Norris 1990, 120).

According to Umberto Eco (1989), “*Finnegans Wake* takes language beyond any boundary of communicability” (61). Similarly, in an interview, Tom Robbins (Richards 2000) describes it as unreadable because its configuration resembles the non-linear functioning of the human mind and consciousness. Seamus Deane (2000) describes *Finnegans Wake*, first and foremost, as unreadable and points out that it breaks all “assumptions about what reading or writing is” (vii). He stresses the complexity of the work and its openness to different meanings, which likely differ even from the ones intended by Joyce. He notes that “the sixty-five languages used in the *Wake* blend and blur into one another” (xlvi).<sup>1</sup>

*Finnegans Wake* is also stigmatized as unintelligible because, reportedly,<sup>1</sup> it contains words made up of the different languages used in it, leading, as it were, to Joyce’s own language. B. Ifor Evans (1939) says that its language is not English or any other language because words “made up out of some eight or nine languages” appear there. The Turkish critic Enis Batur (2016) also underscores this aspect of *Finnegans Wake* saying that “there are no readers today that won’t take *Wake* as supralinguistic, translinguistic, and crosslinguistic. . . . Which language is it translated from when it is translated? From Joycean” (xii-xiii).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is outside the scope of this study to make a stylistic analysis of *Finnegans Wake*.

<sup>2</sup> Translations from Turkish and French sources are mine unless otherwise indicated.

Krzysztof Bartnicki, the Polish translator of *Finnegans Wake*, also defines its language as not English, but "Wakese" (quoted in Bazarnik 2010, 567). Hence, it would be safe to say that most of the connotations of Joyce's coinages in his work are almost unintelligible to English-speaking readers, let alone the readers of its translations into other languages.

Another feature of the work associated with its resistance to being understood is its embodiment of a musical rhythm dominant enough to argue that it is an oral work as much as a literary one. Joyce himself told an enthusiastic reader who expressed his sadness about failure to understand *Finnegans Wake* to "just listen to it" (Pyle and Jewell 2016). In light of all this, it may well be argued that *Finnegans Wake* is challenging the

. . . idealized conception of what translators should know in order to adequately accomplish their mission [based on] the presupposition that the original could be, in some mysterious way, fully exhaustible and controllable; in other words, that the original could be fully decoded, once and for all, by a properly informed reading, which would rely on the acquisition of, or the access to, a totalizing accumulation of knowledge. (Arrojo [1993] 2012, 97-98)

Thus, when the first Turkish translation of *Finnegans Wake* was published by Aylak Adam, it came out under the title of *Finneganın Vahı* with the note "*Terscüme* Umur Çelikyay" on the back cover. '*Terscüme*' is a word derived from *tercüme* (translation). Possible translations of '*terscüme*' into English include 'counter-translation,' 'inverse translation,' or 'contrary translation.' It is thought-provoking that Çelikyay chose a label implying something that is a 'not-translation,' while *Finnegan Uyanması*, the first complete translation, was actually presented with no such disclaimer. Therefore, to scrutinize the concept of '*terscüme*' with a focus on the possible reasons or motives leading to the coinage of the term by the translator, this paper engages paratextual elements<sup>3</sup> of both translations of *Finnegans Wake*, including but not limited to the prefaces and covers of the translations, as well supporting research from the texts themselves.<sup>4</sup>

This article consists of six sections and a conclusion. The following section provides a brief account of the implications of essentialism and anti-essentialism for translators and translation as a means of considering whether the search for alternative designations for 'translation' and 'translator' may result from the essentialist view on translation. The third

<sup>3</sup> For an evaluation on the relevance of paratexts to translation research see Tahir Gürçağlar (2002).

<sup>4</sup> This study does not intend to make a comparison or criticism of the two translations, with its focus only on the newly-introduced concept: '*terscüme*.'

section discusses translatability and untranslatability as dominant concepts influencing the treatment of *Finnegans Wake* in the context of translation.<sup>5</sup> The fourth section presents the essentially deconstructive character of *Finnegans Wake*, which is likely to lead to its stigmatization as ‘untranslatable.’ The fifth section elaborates on the Turkish translations of *Finnegans Wake* with a specific emphasis on ‘terscüme’ through paratextual and textual analyses. The sixth section discusses the implications of the findings obtained from the paratextual and textual elements for the coinage of the term ‘terscüme,’ which is followed by the conclusion.

## **2. The Implications of Essentialism and Anti-Essentialism for Translation and Translators**

The essentialist approach to translation, which asserts that “meanings are objective and stable” (Chesterman and Arrojo 2017, 17) and a transcendental signified exists (Dizdar 2011, 32), dominated translation theory for centuries. Regarding how threatening essentialism may be to translation theory and translators, Arrojo (1998) states that translators and particularly theoreticians who adopt an essentialist conception of translation “which views translation – at least on some level – as a form of symmetrical, ideally neutral exchange or interaction between cultures” wish and attempt to create models or methods that show translators “how to find adequate equivalents” (28). In addition to that, the essentialist approach endeavors to “impose universal models or methods which would successfully deter subjectivity and the undesirable interference of circumstances” (30). Arrojo points out the role essentialism attributes to translators by imposing equivalence as follows:

If meaning, like truth, is indeed comparable to a stable core which we should be able to move around without essential loss, the translator’s task is accordingly that of an invisible carrier whose job is primarily mechanical: to make sure that the transferral of meaning is safely conducted without interfering with the content of whatever is being transported. Accordingly, for basically essentialist approaches – no matter how contemporary or up-to-date they may claim to be – translation is fundamentally a form of achieving equivalence which would strive to produce the illusion of the translator’s ideally transparent intervention. (39-40)

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<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of translatability and untranslatability in the context of *Finnegans Wake* see Baydere (2018).

From this perspective, the translator’s job is destined to fail as s/he is expected not only to “becom[e] utterly invisible” but also to “solv[e] the insurmountable ‘problem’ of having to produce universally acceptable equivalents in spite of all the differences and the unpredictable variables and circumstances involved even in the simplest translation act” (Arrojo 1998, 28). The treatment of translation as a phenomenon that is independent of ideological and cultural contexts pushes the translator to a secondary position equivalent to a machine just repeating what exists without any productive or constructive functions. Arrojo (2010) notes:

In their refusal to accept the productive character of the translator’s activity, essentialist conceptions must disregard the political role of translation and its impact on the construction of identities and cultural relations, and are, also, largely responsible for the age-old prejudices that have often considered translation a secondary, derivative form of writing, reducing the translator’s task to an impossible exercise in invisibility. (248)

On the other hand, introducing ‘deconstruction,’ Derrida ([1972] 1982) questions the existence of a transcendental signified and argues that each signified is also a signifier. Thus, “the distinction between signified and signifier becomes problematical at its root” (20). In the context of translation, the idea that there is no transcendental signified leads to questioning the existence of an ‘original’ meaning which is prioritized and deemed as the absolute criterion of accomplishment. The anti-essentialist approach to translation claims, “meaning is not a stable entity that could be forever stored and protected by the rules and conventions of language,” and “it is inevitably always the product of social and cultural constraints” (Arrojo 1998, 39). It is also not “recoverable and repeated elsewhere without the interference of the subjects, as well as the cultural, historical, ideological or political circumstances involved” (25). Since meanings are not independent of context, “no translation will ever be definite and or universally acceptable” (Chesterman and Arrojo 2017, 23). To Derrida, any process of signification involves *différance*, referring to inevitable difference of meaning and its deferral in the process of signification (Koskinen 1994, 447). Based on this, one can argue that meaning is always produced partially in the process of translation, refuting the unrealistic ideal of meaning-transfer based on one-to-one equivalence.

Arrojo (1998) states that the deconstructionist point of view questions the traditional conception of translation as a process of transfer between languages and cultures that ignores the interference of the translator or the circumstances s/he is in. From the deconstructive

perspective, meaning is not completely recoverable even in the domain of the same language, and the basic trait of all processes of signification is difference. Hence, “the traditional notion of the text as the immobile, protective container of its author’s intentional, supposedly recoverable meaning is radically revised” (41). According to Derrida ([1972] 1982), translation has never involved and will never involve “‘transport’ of pure signifieds from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched.” Accordingly, he defines translation as “a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another” (20). Translation as transformation incorporates the idea that since the translator transforms the text and since it is inevitable for the translator to do so through his/her own interpretation, s/he is now absolutely visible (Chesterman and Arrojo 2017, 17). Therefore, the translator, whose interference is definite, is to take full responsibility for what s/he produces:

The visible translator who is conscious of his or her role and who makes as explicit as possible the motivations, allegiances, and compromises of his or her interpretation is also the translator who must take responsibility for the texts he or she produces, as it is impossible to hide behind the anonymity of the ideal ‘invisibility’ which has allegedly been given up. (Arrojo 1997b, 18)

The recognition of the “transforming and productive character of translation” also implies the recognition of the “authorial role that translators play in the rewriting of originals” (Arrojo [1993] 2012, 101).

### **3. Translatability and Untranslatability**

Debates on translatability have long occupied discussions on translation theory. Since a review of all theoretical approaches would lead to discussion well beyond the scope of this article, only the perspectives relevant to *Finnegans Wake*, which has long been stigmatized as ‘untranslatable,’ are discussed in detail here.<sup>6</sup> It would be safe to say that such translation theory debates reflect, first and foremost, “a conception of translation as integral interlingual representation involving not only notions of equivalence but also . . . texts of comparable length” (Hermans 2011, 300). In other words, the concern for maintaining the source text with all the constituents of its meaning – as if it were possible to detect all of them in any text or in

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<sup>6</sup> For a historical critical analysis of approaches to translatability and untranslatability see De Pedro (1999).

any discourse – precisely and with absolute equivalence underlies discussions of translatability and untranslatability. This pursuit of absolute equivalence is likely the reason that works involving a preponderance of connotations, idiomatic resources, and poetic qualities with words “woven into semantic, metrical, rhyming, intertextual and other patterns” have been considered “least translatable” (302). It can be argued that this is an inevitable outcome of the treatment of translation and the issue of translatability at an exclusively linguistic level.

Going one step further, one may question the nature of the meaning that is to be preserved exactly as it is in the source text. Reflecting on this and rejecting any kind of stable meaning in any discourse, Derrida attributed the quality of impossible to translation. While calling it impossible, however, he also emphasized the inevitability of translation, thereby pointing to the “double bind” as the impossibility of translation and the necessity of translation ([1982] 1985, 102). Defining translation as a “transformation” rather than a “transfer” ([1972] 1982, 20), Derrida rejects the possibility of conveying a discourse in the source text to the target text by keeping it the same. The transformative quality Derrida attributes to translation may actually be said to be associated with Walter Benjamin’s (2004) conception of translation as transformation on the way to the pure language: “translation is removal from one language into another through a continuum of transformations. Translation passes through continua of transformation, not abstract areas of identity and similarity” (70). Clearly, both Benjamin and Derrida lay an emphasis on the impossibility of absolute equivalence or identity in the translation. Such a seemingly pessimistic characterization implies more than a negativity, however. Koskinen (1994) argues: “Deconstruction deprives us of the comfortable fallacy of living in a simple and understandable world. We lose security, but we gain endless possibilities, the unlimited play of meanings” (446). She adds that what deconstruction suggests is not complete impossibility of communication but a “call for radical thinking of the limits of communication” (449). Accordingly, it can be argued that “accepting the existence of untranslatability (i.e. the limits of translation) does not imply a denial of the possibility of translation, but rather implies the contingency of our interpretation of the other” (De Pedro 2001). This idea also shows up in André Lefevere’s treatment of translation as “rewriting” (1992, 9), which suggests that translation is a form of rewriting that, just like any rewriting, manipulates effectively. The transformative quality assigned to translation is based on Derrida’s perception of meaning production involving *différance*, which points to

partiality, besides delay, in any meaning production, including translation. This does not suggest failure; instead, it exhibits a fundamental principle guiding any process of interpretation. The important idea here is that “That nothing is negligible . . . is not a principle that could possibly survive in translation. Priorities must be set” (Senn 1989, 79). In fact, Derrida ([1996] 1998) states that “in a sense nothing is untranslatable; but *in another sense* everything is untranslatable” (56-57).

Thus, with the shift from a conception of translation based on equivalence<sup>7</sup> to one based on difference, the phenomenon of untranslatability begins to dissipate. The limits of communicability broaden out what the translator may do by allowing him to give up a hopeless search for the impossible: recovering a meaning produced in one language in another. Indeed, as pointed out by Chen Yongguo (2003),

problems involved in translation are, perhaps, not problems of translation but of language. . . . Since comprehension between two persons and two peoples can never be complete, translation from one language into another cannot be complete either. Translation is a task that can never be completely fulfilled just as the process of signification can never come to an end. (37-38)

To illustrate this, we may, citing from Hermans (2011), discuss the polysemy contained in the question “Can anything be translated?”. All of what could be intended in that question may not be reproduced all at the same time even in English because the person uttering the question may be asking about either the possibility or the permissibility of translation here. As a matter of fact, according to Hermans, “total translatability and total untranslatability are best regarded as limiting concepts” (300) and “since translation theory, like philosophy, has no choice but to translate, the demonstration of untranslatability leaves the discipline in a quandary” (303). The implication of the challenge for translators and the translation profession may be as follows: “since [the translators] have no choice but to translate, the demonstration of untranslatability leaves the [profession] in a quandary” (303). “The dogma of untranslatability” derived from absolute equivalence expectations in essence “preempts free choice on the translator’s part” (Crisafulli 2003, 34).

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<sup>7</sup> For a historical overview of “translation equivalence in paradigms” see Bengi-Öner (1990).



#### 4. The Deconstructive Character of *Finnegans Wake*

*Finnegans Wake* has a lot to imply about the deconstructive perspective on language, meaning, and translation. First and foremost, Derrida ([1982] 1984) himself reflects on *Finnegans Wake* in "Two Words for Joyce." Derrida discusses Joyce's use of language through two words: "He War" (145). These two words were simultaneously written in two different languages (i.e. English and German) (155) and have an indefinite number of possible meanings through a variety of possible functions within the two languages at work. It should be kept in mind that the focus here is on understanding and meaning production for readers of Joyce's work in the original language. Actually, Derrida observes that the readers are "caught in his [Joyce's] archive as in a spider's web" (146). Given its use of about forty different languages and its polyglossic feature (145), Derrida associates the "He War" phrase in the book with the confusion created by the God of Babel. He says, "'He War' must cross the threshold of intelligibility, through the thousand and one meanings of the expression, for a history to take place, if at least it is to take place, and at least the history of the work" (149).

Derrida ([1982] 1984) discusses "He war" within the scope of translation as well and says, "'He War' calls for translation, both orders and forbids transposition into the other language. Change me (into yourself) and above all do not touch me, read and do not read, say and do not say" (154). This, of course, implies his view of translation as both necessary and impossible ([1982] 1985, 102). The impossibility mainly results from the multiplicity of languages employed in *Finnegans Wake*:

The *fact* of the multiplicity of languages, what *was done* as confusion of languages can no longer let itself be translated into *one* language, nor even . . . into language [*la langue*]. To translate 'he war' into the system of a single language . . . is to erase the event of the mark, not only what is said in it but its very saying and writing, the mark of its law and the law of its mark. (Derrida [1982] 1984, 155)

Showing the co-working and intertwinement of languages in this way, Derrida ([1982] 1985, 100) also questions the conception of a language as an intact and unified system within itself, thereby shaking the foundations of the conception of translation as a transfer from one language to another. Indeed, such a break of the foundations can be said to be not only about translation:

The impurity in language (and not just differences between languages) is important here, because it implies an unstable element or an untranslatability within every

language that makes ‘successful translation’ impossible. This is an impossibility then not only between languages but within language, at the heart of meaning. Yet, if we want to continue to live together in community and not give up on the possibility of communication, the act of translation becomes necessary. Thus, we are caught in a ‘double bind’ where the untranslatable is the possibility that makes translation both impossible and necessary. (Bergdahl 2009, 36)

Seamus Deane (2000) also calls *Finnegans Wake*, because of the multiplicity of languages and meanings in it, “a true Tower of Babel” (xlvi). He also associates the composition of *Finnegans Wake* with an endless process of meaning production and thus, a translation in itself both for Joyce and his readers:

The language of the *Wake* is a composite of words and syllables combined with such a degree of fertile inventiveness that new sounds and new meanings are constantly ingeminated. Joyce involves himself and us in an extremely complex series of translations that are endless because there is no original and no target language to supply a limit to the visual and sonar transactions that are negotiated by the text. Indeed, it may be that the only assumption that permits us to embark upon the activity of translation is itself the source of the work’s conflictual and prolific nature – viz. that the original language is the target language. The book is written in the English language and also against the English language; it converts itself into English and perverts itself from English. (viii)

He also points out the difference-based composition of *Finnegans Wake* by saying: “In the *Wake*, words achieve their meanings by the establishment of difference, sometimes within the same sound, sometimes within proximate sounds, often by visual as well as aural alterations and inflections” (xlvi).

##### **5. *Finnegans Wake* in Turkish with a New (Mis)Conception: ‘Terscüme’**

This section will present a paratextual analysis supported by textual examples to provide an insight into the coinage of the concept of ‘terscüme’ and the deliberate self-identification of the translator as the ‘Turkicizer’ but not ‘translator.’

As previously stated, the subject of this study is Umur Çelikyay’s translation titled *Finneganın Vahı* published by Aylak Adam in 2016 and 2017 in two volumes, with the third and final volume still in progress. Çelikyay’s work was the first translation of *Finnegans Wake* in Turkish. While the front cover of the book only features the name of James Joyce, the back cover of the book includes the inscription, “*Terscüme* Umur Çelikyay” (Joyce

2016a). Before analyzing the reasons why Çelikyay may have chosen this designation and its implications, it is necessary to identify what the derived word ‘terscüme’ may denote.

‘Terscüme’ seems to be derived from again the Turkish word *tercüme* (translation). By making the first syllable ‘ters-’ instead of ‘ter-,’ however, the translator and the editorial director seem to have inserted the meaning of ‘counter,’ ‘inverse,’ or ‘contrary,’ among other possible translations of ‘ters-,’ in the label they used to designate their work. As a result, it can be said that *Finneganın Vahı* is presented as something that is not a ‘translation,’ per se, but something contrary to or opposing it. In his preface to the book titled “Türkçeleştirenin Önsözü *Finneganın Vahı*, Bir Terscüme Çalışması” (The Turkicizer’s preface *Finneganın vahı* as a *terscüme* work) (Joyce 2016a, 25), Çelikyay explains his motive as follows:

Owing to this book’s linguistic features, we approached this work from the very beginning as an effort to **Turkicize** rather a translation. The text you hold in your hand should be seen as a possible Turkish **version**: that is, one of the many possible **adaptations** of *Finnegans Wake*. My colleagues that prepared the **adaptation** named *Veillée Pinouilles*, the Frenchified version of *Finnegans Wake*, which I frequently resorted to, derived the word “**contraduction**” (counter-translation)<sup>8</sup> which I think is quite Joycean, for the work they produced. That term also evokes the concept of “contradiction” phonetically. This being the case we deemed the concept of *terscüme* for our work. (Joyce 2016a, 28; emphasis mine)

Çelikyay further elaborates on the reason for not calling it a ‘translation’ but an effort to ‘Turkicize’ as follows:

While the reader can evaluate various possibilities suggested by a specific sentence, decide on one of them, and proceed to the next sentence, the translator is required to fixate on one of the possibilities and mostly pigeonhole other possibilities. Unless s/he exerts a special effort, it is hard to make the Turkicized text polyvalent identically. I tried to reflect the polysemy while producing the Turkish text as much as I could. With the same approach, I endeavored to attain the taste, weirdness, and oddness of the source text in the target language. I also found the language I produced strange from time to time. I mostly compared it to chewing pebbles. In such perplexing situations, we turned to the French and German versions of the text to crosscheck. Owing to these characteristics of the work, we approached this endeavor as a **Turkicization** effort rather than a **translation**. (Joyce 2016a, 27-28; emphasis mine)

As shown in the excerpts above, the linguistic features of *Finnegans Wake* have made Çelikyay call his work a version, an adaptation, a ‘terscüme’ — his new concept — but not a

<sup>8</sup> Here, Çelikyay gets ‘contraduction’ as ‘karşıçeviri’, composed of the Turkish words ‘karşı,’ having meanings such as ‘counter,’ ‘against,’ and ‘opposing,’ + ‘çeviri’ (translation).

translation. He sees the process as an effort to ‘Turkicize’ but not ‘translate,’ since the process involved “a stream of possibilities.” He emphasizes the potential of his having missed some possible meanings intended by Joyce as being among the reasons for calling his work a ‘version’ but not a ‘translation’ (Canseven 2016).

Moreover, as seen above, Çelikyay makes a distinction between a reader and a translator and hence reading and translation. In conjunction with this, in response to the question, “Did you enjoy the text you translated?” he said, “Do you want me to answer your question as a reader or as a translator? To be frank, if they had put the text on my table and told me to read it, I may not have read it” (Özçelik 2016). The turning to French and German versions to crosscheck textual choices is also attention-grabbing. This is also manifested on the title page, where Kaya Tokmakçioğlu, the editorial director, is presented with English and German in parentheses, and Umur Çelikyay, the Turkicizer, is presented with English and French (Joyce 2016a, 4).

In an interview, Çelikyay further explains the reason why he called himself a ‘Turkicizer’ instead of a ‘translator’ as follows:

I tried to preserve the polysemy in the Turkish text as much as I could do, as much as my pen was able. Likewise, we tried to express the taste, weirdness, oddness, and bent double quality of the work in Turkish, to transfer them into it. From the very beginning, we approached our work as **creating a version, making an adaptation rather than a translation**. We used the title “**Türkçeleştirilen**” (**Turkicizer**) instead of “**çevirmen**” (**translator**) on the cover of the work. (Üster 2015; emphasis mine)

When we examine the French translation, which Çelikyay drew on to name his work as a ‘terscüme,’ we really see a ‘contraduction.’<sup>9</sup> ‘Contraduction’ is the name the French translator used for his translations on the website named “Veillée Pinouilles” (Pinouilles wake), the title of his translation of *Finnegans Wake* into French. The French translator Hervé Michel has published several translations of *Finnegans Wake* online since 2004, for he can and does make continuous updates and revisions to his work online (Pyle 2017). Though, to the best of our knowledge, Michel has not explained why he calls his translation a ‘contraduction,’ his remarks on his translation may provide some insight about it. In his preface to the 2017 translation titled “Pourquoi j’ai traduit *Finnegans Wake*?” (Why did I

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<sup>9</sup> For the use of the concept within the context of training in translation, differently from the discussion in this paper, see Ladmiral (1972).

translate *Finnegans Wake*?), he clarifies his motive for translation with, unsurprisingly, a reference to Derrida:

Shown as the literary monument of the twentieth century, given as the pile of debris of universal culture, *Finnegans Wake* offered itself in a fascinating swarm, a shimmering of suggestive splendor emanating from a mind both sensitive and hilarious. The strange forms on the page, **far from appearing untranslatable**, immediately invited me to seek transpositions by mobilizing all my language resources. **Derrida noticed this call**, and I felt at first the urge to reconstitute the material of the book in French. (Joyce 2017; emphasis mine)

In the call Michel mentions in his translation published in a website format (Joyce 2017), Derrida says, “‘He War’ calls for translation, both orders and forbids transposition into the other language” ([1982] 1984, 154). This implies that the French translator has some Derridean motive for his choice of *Finnegans Wake* for translation and possibly for why he calls it a ‘contraduction.’ This could lead us to think that his naming of his work as ‘contraduction’ does not suggest that he thinks of his work as something different from ‘translation,’ unlike Çelikyay’s case. Not thinking *Finnegans Wake* untranslatable, the French translator also seems to be stressing, in an interview on his work, the interpretive, subjective role of the translator as follows, which may also be said to imply the partialness and ceaselessness of meaning production:

The reader still gets access to the work, read by someone who says to him: “listen to how I think I could say what my access to the book’s culture allows me to understand in French.” . . . In short, everything in my translation is my interpretative spin. . . . Hence, translating has to be attempted over and over again, infusing in the receiver’s language the results of this demanding endeavor that is reading *Finnegans Wake*. . . . My personal enjoyment, which is enduring, has much regard to an ideal readership my goal is an ideal conversation until and about the end of our lives. (Pyle 2017)

Attributing an interpretive role to the translator as a reader, Michel, unlike Çelikyay, does not view reading and translating independently but considers them intertwined. In his preface to his translation, he notes that he considers reading *Finnegans Wake* to be translating it (Joyce 2017).

Now that we have covered the translator’s views regarding why he has called *Finneganın Vahı* a ‘terscüme’ and himself a ‘Turkicizer’ through paratextual elements, we will turn to consider examples from the text of *Finneganın Vahı* itself.<sup>10</sup>

### Example (1)

#### TT:

Yaşlısomoncuğun düzduvardan bir zamanlar düşüşünün  
(babadalalgargarg**gökgürültü**takammınaonnkonbronntonnertuonnthunntrovarrhounw  
nshawntohohoodenenthurnuk!) öyküsü, erken yatılan saatlerde ve yaşamın geriye  
kalanında Hristiyan ozanların diyarında anlatıldı durdu. (Joyce 2016a, 32; emphasis  
mine)

#### ST:

The fall

(**babadalgharaghtakamminarronkonbronntonnerronntuonnthunntrovarrho  
unawnskawntoohoooodenenthurnuk!**) of a once wallstrait oldparr is retaled early  
in bed and later on life down through all christian minstrelsy. (Joyce 2000, 3;  
emphasis mine)

Çelikyay said that he translated the phrase in bold evoking the sound of a thunder into Turkish partially, referring to just the insertion of the word *gökgürültü* (thunder) and keeping all the rest the same in his Turkish text (Canseven 2016).

### Example (2)

#### TT:

Kimi **tanıyoksunuz buyakında? tembeleydi** ve centilmen? (Joyce 2016a, 195;  
emphasis mine)

#### ST:

Who do you **no tonigh**, lazy and **gentleman**? (Joyce 2000, 126; emphasis mine)

Translating “no tonigh” as “tanıyoksunuz bu yakında,” some distorted form of *taniyorsunuz bu yakında* (know soon or know around) and “lazy and gentleman” as “tembeleydi ve centilmen,” composed of a distorted form of *tembeldi* (was lazy) and *centilmen* (gentleman), Çelikyay states that he attempted to reflect what he saw on the surface level:

First, I tried to reflect what I saw on the surface level. . . . There is a very weird introduction to one of the chapters. He says, “Who do you no tonigh, lazy and gentleman?”. Here, he turned “ladies and gentleman” into “lazy and gentleman.” This joke continues in different appearances. You should take this into account as well . . .

<sup>10</sup> As it is beyond the purpose of this paper to make a translational analysis of the whole text, examples are out of those Çelikyay used to explain his ‘terscüme.’

It worked there. I mostly did so. This is because I had to reflect the apparent weirdness. (Canseven 2016; emphasis mine)

### Example (3)

#### TT:

Yolsa, o alaycı ukala gibi, **cebel ile çnigen denizi arasında bedevi işi vısvas gider gelimiz.** (Joyce 2016a, 34; emphasis mine)

#### ST:

Otherways **wesways like that provost scoffing bedoneen the jebel and the jpysian sea.** (Joyce 2000, 5; emphasis mine)

Translating “wesways” as “vısvas,” evoking the word *vesvese*, which is associated with the devil, and making the sentence “bedevi işi vısvas gelimiz” (we go and come wesways like a Bedouin), Çelikyay said that he missed the other meaning the sentence may refer to, thereby resulting in a loss, which is why he calls his work a ‘version’:

You also ask yourself, “What does this mean?”. When you read it, it gives you the feeling of a man who needlessly comes and goes and wanders around. As to the story of “vısvas” here, we made it similar to “wesways” in the original sentence, but it is a reference to the devil: “epitaph of the devil.” Actually, the original sentence also has a reference to the idiom “between the devil and the deep blue sea,” but this is lost here. You can’t capture both. That is why this is a version. (Canseven 2016)

Another similar loss, according to Çelikyay, is provided below.

### Example (4):

#### TT:

Aşkların çalgıcısı Sör Tristram, **çalkantılı denizi** geçip, Avrupa Minör’ün cılız kanalında, yarımadam savaşını eline almak için Kuzey Armorika’dan denüz dönmemiştii. (Joyce 2016a, 31; emphasis mine)

#### ST:

Sir Tristram, violer d’amores, fr’over **the short sea**, had passencore rearrived from North Armorica on this side the scraggy isthmus of Europe Minor to wielderfight his penisolate war. (Joyce 2000, 3; emphasis mine)

Translating “the short sea” as “çalkantılı deniz” (turbulent sea), Çelikyay said, “I connected ‘the short sea’ to the English Channel. The glosses say ‘turbulent sea,’ but they also say ‘short sea.’ I left it as ‘turbulent sea’” (Canseven 2016). In the same sentence, he translated “penisolate” into Turkish as “yarımadam,” which is a word composed of the words “half” and “man,” besides the meaning *yarımada* (peninsula) contained in it. In his interview to Üster, Çelikyay explained it this way:

The biggest challenge in the Turkicization of this text lies in these wordplays. I tried to recreate similar plays as much as I could. The first example that came to my mind was

the phrase “penisolate war” on the very first page of *Finnegans Wake*. This phrase embodies the ideas of “peninsula,” “being isolated,” and “penis,” at the same time. I reflected this as “yarımadam savaşı” [half-man war; *yarımada* meaning peninsula also contained in it]. All in all, as the original text did, we reflected both “peninsula” and “isolated penis” at the same time. (2015)

In another interview, Çelikyay described one of his methods of coping with such intricate meaning challenges as follows:

Kaya often looked up the German book, and I often cross-referenced the French book. We resorted to these books to crosscheck. I would sometimes say to Kaya, “Kaya, I feel as if I were chewing pebbles.” I wrote such weird things that I myself found it odd. Then I would open the French book and note that he was farther down the strange road than I was. I always felt better after that. (Canseven 2016)

Consistently with this, in a chat on his work, Çelikyay offers the opinion that the French translator was lucky because of the similarity between French and English at those so-called untranslatable points and where Michel had the luxury of leaving the words close in the two languages as they were (Özçelik 2016).

Though the focus of study is Çelikyay’s translation or ‘terscüme’ – to use his word – Fuat Sevimay translation titled *Finnegan Uyanması* is also worth mentioning. Despite the so-called untranslatability of *Finnegans Wake*, Sevimay felt no need to call his work and himself something other than ‘a translation’ and ‘the translator,’ respectively. As a matter of fact, in “Çevirmenin Önsözü” (The translator’s preface), he says, “Turkish became the seventh language into which that unique work was completely translated” (Joyce 2016b, vii). In response to questions about the translatability of *Finnegans Wake*, he says, as part of an interview, “in general, I think that even madness can be translated. . . . Translating *Finnegans Wake* is to give your interpretation of the work – one of the infinite possible ones – into your own language” (Pyle and Jewell 2016).

The examples Sevimay himself provides to explain his translation are worth mentioning here:

#### Example (5)

##### TT:

Bir somonların simsarı ihtiyar duvarcının parrdır da küldür düşüşü  
(patırdara’dgurgulalivirhatditingümbürgökgürültüsüvorodumvrodinprasakgro  
makukihilişibleğomakdagürül!” önceleri yataкта sonra hayatta, Hıristiyan  
türkülerıyla anlatılır da durur. (Joyce 2016b, 3; emphasis mine)



**ST:**

The fall

**(bababadalgharaghtakamminarronkonnbronntonnerronntuonnthunntrovarrho unawnskawntoohooorderenthurnuk!)** of a once wallstrait oldparr is retaled early in bed and later on life down through all christian minstrelsy. (Joyce 2000, 3; emphasis mine)

In another interview, Sevimay made the following comments on the translation of the expression evoking the sound of a thunder into Turkish:

A good example of polyglossia in the work is Joyce’s words of thunder. The text contains thunders, each of which is composed of one hundred words (one of them one hundred and one). They refer to the fall of the Wall, the rumbling of God, and many other things. In the very first thunder, Joyce makes use of expressions of thunder in various languages across the world. I thought that it would be nice to use thunders belonging to our geography: that is Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Arabic, Greek, Bosnian, and some others. (Yılmaz 2016)

**Example (6)**

**TT:**

Neydi, vurun ha diyenle durun ha diyeni kapıştıran, hastrigotlarla vizigotları kızıştıran! Vrak de Vurak, Kak Kak Kubarak, Geberek göverek! Ulayığit ulaslan ulaoğul ulagitti! Vay eyvah! (Joyce 2016b, 4; emphasis mine)

**ST:**

What clashes here of wills gen wonts, oystrygods gaggin fishygods! Brékkek Kékkek Kékkek Kékkek! Kóax Kóax Kóax! Ualu Ualu Ualu! Quáouauh! (Joyce 2000, 4; emphasis mine)

Quoting Joyce’s answer to a reader who failed to understand *Finnegans Wake* by reading it – “Then just listen to it.” – Sevimay shares his opinion that “Joyce’s aim with *Finnegans Wake* was much more than writing a wonderful novel (he already had written one previously). He tried to catch the sounds within the history of humanity” (Pyle and Jewell 2016). Sevimay says that one of his primary concerns in the translation process was the musical rhythm. He commented, “Regarding phonetic spelling, if you focus on your target language, its labials, genitives, semantic, agglutinative form, yes, mostly you have the chance to catch the sound” (Pyle and Jewell 2016). Sevimay does not see facing such polyglossia and polysemy coming with sounds as a problem. As a matter of fact, he says, “It should be noted again that our point should not be to catch all of them. The flow of the text and the riverbed of Joycean will make us reach a different sea in each reading” (Joyce 2016b, ix). Emphasizing the interpretive nature of translation, he also says, “When you attempt to translate — or interpret — *Finnegans Wake*, you have to be aware that, inevitably, you will lose some points

at the source, and you have to gain some others in your target language” (Pyle and Jewell 2016). In tandem with all this, he expresses his view on the translator’s task in another interview by saying: “It is the task of a dictionary to transfer a language word by word. The translator does more than a dictionary” (Er 2018).

## 6. Discussion

*Finnegans Wake* in Turkish seems to offer great value regarding the perspectives on translation, translator, language, reading, and understanding. Its first translation into Turkish entitled *Finneganın Vahı* attempted to introduce a new concept to the Turkish literary system: ‘terscüme,’ which can be translated into English as ‘counter-translation,’ ‘inverse translation,’ or ‘contrary translation,’ among other alternatives. These negative-sounding features attributed to the said translation may raise questions such as ‘what is contrary in it?’ or ‘what does it counter?’ or ‘what makes something a translation if *Finneganın Vahı* is not one?’

The translator or ‘Turkicizer,’ as he calls himself in this work, suggests the answers to many over these questions in his comments on himself, his translation, and the translation process. Though his statement that his work is a ‘terscüme’ but not a ‘translation’ seems to imply the production of a new kind of text, his definition of his work, along with some other names such as ‘adaptation’ or ‘version’ actually suggests that the concept of ‘terscüme’ emerged as a result of an effort to describe a work that is, by its very nature, a translation. The creative aspect of the text, however, seems to have caused its producer to abstain from calling it so. The translator Çelikyay states that they (he and the editorial director) coined the term ‘terscüme’ because of the unique linguistic features of *Finnegans Wake*, particularly the polysemy and polyglossia. These terms imply that the author intended the existence and derivation of more than one meaning through the words he used or coined, and the translator’s particular challenge consists in having to choose only one meaning among all possible meanings. This means, of course, that other meanings or translations of the same text are possible. However, they call any such rendering ‘terscüme’ but not ‘translation.’ This understanding, however, evokes the traditional notion of translation which considers translation merely “as reproduction, in which the translation is meant to reproduce the original, the whole original, and nothing but the original” (Hermans 1996, 41).

The other names or categories the Turkish translator Çelikyay can be said to use synonymously or in concert with ‘terscüme’ are ‘adaptation,’ ‘version,’ ‘trial of translation,’

and ‘Turkicized form.’ Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997) define ‘adaptation’ as “a term traditionally used to refer to any TT in which a particularly free translation strategy has been adopted” (3) and ‘version’ as “a term commonly used to describe a TT which in the view of the commentator departs too far from the original to be termed a translation” (195). Both of these terms are pejoratively used to make a distinction between what can and cannot be called a ‘translation.’ Thus, Çelikyay can be said to have given his work a name implying a differentiation from and even contrariness to translation. Çelikyay’s attempt to make such a distinction seems due to an apparent perception of his inability to provide stable, correct correspondents covering all possible meanings in the original text and implies “a concept of the reader as the passive receiver of the text in which the Truth is enshrined” (Bassnett 2002, 84). Çelikyay’s perception of possible deviation from the meanings intended by Joyce appears to have caused him to feel that he “transgressed” (84) the limits of what a translator can do or that he failed to achieve an ideal translation. This may explain why he intentionally calls himself a ‘Turkicizer’ but not a ‘translator.’ Toury (1995) highlights the inconvenience of such distinctions by describing them as “a priori, and hence non-cultural and ahistorical” (31). Furthermore, this approach also raises the question of the enforceability of the limits of what must be called an ‘adaptation’ or a ‘version’ rather than a ‘translation,’ given that any one translation involves a certain amount of adaptation (Nord [1988] 1991, 29-30).

Çelikyay’s approach seems to cast the translator as a carrier of invariant meaning from one language to another and to define translation as an equivalence-based transfer from one language to another. The coinage of the concept of ‘terscüme’ to differentiate his work from a translation based largely on impossibility of reflecting the entire polysemy and polyglossia of *Finnegans Wake* in its source language also raises a question with regards to the nature of reading and understanding within the original language. Do we coin new concepts just because we interpret a written text or a person’s words in our own language in different ways or because the words are open to different interpretations due to an inherent polysemic quality? Should we call such situations ‘contrary readings’ or ‘contrary understandings’? Or should we just refer to what comes out through such processes as ‘different readings’ and ‘different understandings’? To the best of our experience, the latter seems more plausible. Indeed, all literary circles point out that *Finnegans Wake* was composed in dozens of different languages. Additionally, the complexity is not only about the dispersion of different languages across the book but also the possible use of more than one language (some say even

nine different languages) within a single word. The original language of *Finnegans Wake* is so open to discussion that it is sometimes called 'Wakeese' or 'Joycean.' Thus, it may be argued that the reason underlying Çelikyay's concept is more about his conception of translation and perception of untranslatability, though Çelikyay himself does not use the word 'untranslatable' and actually does translates the text. His reticence to call it a translation and designate himself as a translator implies both a fixed definition of translation as well as an aberration from that standard. Such an understanding could easily lead to the perception of *Finnegans Wake* as 'untranslatable' because of all its weirdness, linguistic features, polysemy, polyglossia, and other stylistic complexities.

The reason for such a restrictive view of translation can be said to be based on an "a priori ideal definition" of translation (Delabastita 1993, 172). This ideal translation perception manifests itself in Çelikyay's discourse on his work. Appearing to take translation as a linear transfer from one language to another, Çelikyay comments that the translator of the French work is luckier because the two languages contain similar words. They (he and the editorial director) drew on the translations of *Finnegans Wake* in different languages considering such affinity. This seems to assume that the more affinity two languages have, the more translatable a text or work is between them, and vice versa, and that dissimilarity between languages is likely to pave the way for untranslatability in the end. This view seems to be the product of a reductionist conception of translation that idealizes "literal equivalents (i.e. formal renderings based on the morphological/structural properties)" for "a satisfactory adequate translation" (Crisafulli 2001, 13). This assumption regarding language affinities may function as the clearest display of Çelikyay's perception of translation as a transfer from one language to another on the basis of equivalence.

An understanding of translation that removes any creative and transforming quality from the task and defines it as a utopian transfer of stable meanings bears the risk of depriving the translators of what they have, their name being in the first place. As a matter of fact, based on Çelikyay's new 'terscüme' concept, the Turkish poet, author, and translator Adnan Özer (2016) calls the translators of *Finnegans Wake* into other languages 'terscümen.' This term is derived from *tercüman* (translator) and, like 'terscüme,' has certain negative connotations such as 'counter translator,' 'inverse translator,' or 'contrary translator,' among others. Özer (2016) also seems to approve this designation for the Turkish translation of *Finnegans Wake* when he comments, in his column, that "when one reads the Turkish book, he will clearly

understand that what is flowing there is ‘much beyond’ translation:” it is actually a “mind-harming Turkish projection.” Çelikyay’s newly coined term seems to have paved the way for a new but weird name for translators, implying a deviation from what they are supposed to be abiding by strictly.

Çelikyay’s discussion of his work mostly with an emphasis on losses in the translation process embodies a “negative kind of reasoning” (Toury 1995, 84), which seems to give rise to a restrictive attitude toward what a translation may involve and what a translator is authorized to do and still be called a translator. However, there may be something wrong with seeking a level of semantic faithfulness that inevitably leads to the idea of untranslatability. Pursuing equivalence at word level, which seems to be the case for Çelikyay, since the polysemy of words hinders him from calling it a translation, may involve some risks. First, Joyce himself emphasizes the musical feature of his work by encouraging his readers to feel it by listening. Second, since *Finnegans Wake* is commonly regarded to have been written, not in standard English or in another specific language, but in a language called ‘Joycean’ or ‘Wakeese,’ characterized by the coinage of new words through derivation from or distortion of different words and languages, as well as the formation of words through concurrent use of different languages as part of what Derrida calls as an equivocal paradigm of thought (i.e. “Joyce of *Finnegans Wake*”) (1984, 146), the book can already be seen as “an act of translation,” according to Fritz Senn (quoted in van Hulle 2015, 42), in its very first creation. In addition to that, the original *Finnegans Wake* is even controversial as it is reported that there were discrepancies between the serialized and book versions (van Hulle 2015, 41). All this seemingly incomplete or open-to-interpretation nature of *Finnegans Wake*, though maybe at an extreme level, may be regarded as its, or any text’s – with various degrees – rejection of being confined to a fixed meaning. The implication of this for the translator, however, is not necessarily a negative, restraining one that strips him/her from a name when creativity is involved. Rather it is one which makes him/her, surely inevitably, more engaged in the decoding and recoding textual process. Indeed, a reversed perspective would allow for seeing the polysemy of the text as an opportunity or relief for the translator in that there is not something unique, some single ideal.

Another implication of ‘terscüme’ is about the translator’s invisibility. At first, we may say that the translator Çelikyay is very visible on the back cover of the book that reads “*Terscüme* Umur Çelikyay” (Joyce 2016a). Not calling his work ‘translation’ and himself a

'translator' of *Finneganın Vahı*, however, may imply that he is not visible as a translator. He frequently emphasizes not being the translator of the book and indicates that the work is not a 'translation.' Indeed, 'terscüme' may have something to suggest about the translator's invisibility. Arrojo (1997b) notes, "the visible translator . . . must take responsibility for the texts he or she produces, as it is impossible to hide behind the anonymity of the ideal 'invisibility'" (18). Accordingly, it may be argued here that Çelikyay denies or waives his name as a translator so as not to be visible as a 'translator.' His conscious or unconscious understanding of translation may be suggesting him that a translator is and should remain invisible. As a matter of fact, in one of his interviews on translation, he says, "I don't have my name on the commercial translations I do, which I don't find odd because I think the translator should be invisible or unnoticeable and . . . his ego should not precede the job he does" (Çelikyay 2017, 86). This perspective evokes Arrojo's (2005) words associating the lack of ego with "bizarre professional ethics" which are characterized by the translator's alleged invisibility and non-interference (227). In other words, not using the name 'translator' or not naming his work as a 'translation' may be about avoiding responsibility. Basically, marking *Finneganın Vahı* as a 'terscüme' provides differentiation from the ideal 'translation' involving one-to-one equivalence and may save one from being criticized as a translator, even if it also results in the loss of the name and reputation as a translator. As a matter of fact, Çelikyay emphasized his not calling his work a 'translation' and himself a 'translator' when responding to a suggestion about labeling works like *Finneganın Vahı* in Turkish as "rewriting, but not translation" (Üster 2015). In this way, the translator seems to be assuming no responsibility that would be attributed to a 'translator.' It is important to note here, however, that what the translator seems to be evading is the translator's responsibility based on the traditional understanding of translation, i.e. the ideal of one-to-one equivalence without intervention. This conception views translation as a transfer, rather than an interpretive transformation, and seems to be manifesting itself throughout Çelikyay's discourse on translation.

Çelikyay's evasion from responsibility as a 'translator' is also observable in his attempts to cross-check his choices in his Turkish work with *Finnegans Wake* in different languages, especially in those having affinity to English. His idealized conception of translation seems to be limited to copying or reproducing the source text exactly as it is without any loss. His approach may also bring the assumption that translation is "mostly a

mechanical activity which does not involve specific skills apart from the adequate knowledge of the pair of languages involved in any instance of meaning transferral” (Arrojo 2005, 226). Probably because the above-mentioned cross-checking process did not turn to be fruitful enough and he inevitably came up with losses by saying goodbye to equivalence and total translatability, he does not assume responsibility for his product as its ‘translator’ and decides to call it ‘*terscüme*,’ with his own name remaining ‘Turkicizer’ instead of ‘translator.’ Once again, his choice makes it clear that “it is the recognition of the translator’s name as proper and rightful that will free the translator’s visibility from the stigma of impropriety or abuse” (Arrojo 1997a, 31).

## 7. Conclusion

The essentialist perspective on translation seems to have caused the Turkish translation of *Finnegans Wake* to be marked as ‘*terscüme*,’ which implies something that is not translation, or even contrary to translation, and allows its translator to waive his name as ‘translator.’ A restrictive perspective on translation that is characterized by concerns about equivalence, loss, faithfulness, and invisibility and that treats translation as a transfer reduces transformation to such an extent that when something in the so-called original is reimagined or a particular feature is lost, the translator’s name is lost as well. New titles are considered to pose no problem as long as the work is designated as something other than a ‘translation.’ In fact, what is in circulation as a ‘*terscüme*’ in the Turkish literary system is a translation. This shows how a translator’s limited philosophy of translation may lead to the loss of his name and the name of his job. This study shows the necessity and value of training translators to be aware that translation is simply a form of meaning production just like writing, reading, and even understanding, all of which are creative processes. Their consciousness should be raised with regards to their inevitable intervention, visibility, creativity, transforming capacity, authority, and the responsibility that comes along with them. With full internalization of these facts, translators will most probably not need to call them themselves or their works anything other than ‘translator’ and ‘translation,’ respectively. Such an awareness, as Arrojo (1998) notes, “will begin to allow translators to make the difficult transition from sensitive amateurs or talented craftsmen to self-conscious writers, who know about their fundamental role in the shaping of the cultural and social conditions of their work” (44).

Nobody stops calling a reader a ‘reader’ when s/he chooses a specific meaning to a text that is open to many alternative interpretations. Similarly, it seems groundless and simplistic to stop calling a translator a ‘translator’ just because s/he translates a specific meaning among many possible alternatives. Stigmatizing a text as ‘untranslatable’ and not translating it or giving the translation a different designation (other than ‘translation’) is also incongruous, given that every moment of humanity passes with both attempts and failures to understand even in one’s own language, let alone different languages. What is at stake in different translations is just that different translations – just like different understandings and different readings – can co-exist as ‘translations.’ If this view can be adopted in place of the traditional conception of translation, then translators will be able to continue the role and influence they have maintained from time immemorial, with their well-established names as ‘translators.’



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