

# FROM *MOTHERLESS BROOKLYN* TO *ÖKSÜZ BROOKLYN*: TRANSLATING THE STYLE OF JONATHAN LETHEM

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## Abstract

The works of the contemporary American author Jonathan Lethem suggest themselves as a fertile ground for a sound discussion of style during the translation process due to the distinctive style that the author develops in his novels. This study entitled “From *Motherless Brooklyn* to *Öksüz Brooklyn*: Translating the Style of Jonathan Lethem” takes the aforementioned argument as a point of departure, and provides an analysis of the Turkish translation of *Motherless Brooklyn* from the vantage point of stylistics, as well as from the perspective of the notion of metonymics. In terms of analyzing the style of the target text and source text respectively, this paper benefits from Raymond van den Broeck’s model so as to develop a descriptive approach. Furthermore, as regards to the notion of metonymics, this paper draws on Maria Tymoczko’s theoretical writings on the subject in order to demonstrate the metonymic aspects of *Motherless Brooklyn*, and the second chapter of the novel “Motherless Brooklyn” respectively, with the purpose of setting the ground for a stylistic analysis of the target text through the notion of metonymics. Moreover, by concentrating on the excerpts from “Öksüz Brooklyn”, the article provides a stylistic analysis of Sabri Gürses’ translation with the intention of offering the chance for the reader to trace the distinctive style of Jonathan Lethem through the Turkish translation of his novel.

**Key Words:** Style, stylistics, metonymics, Jonathan Lethem, decisions in translation.

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## Özet

Çağdaş Amerikan yazar Jonathan Lethem'in eserleri, yazarın romanlarında geliştirdiği biçem dikkate alındığında, çeviri sürecinde biçem kavramının sahip olabileceği rolü inceleyebilmek açısından verimli bir zemin oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışma, söz konusu tartışmayı çıkış noktası olarak, *Motherless Brooklyn*'in Türkçe çevirisinin, biçem ve metonimi kavramları açısından bir çözümlemesini sunmaktadır. Makalede, kaynak ve erek metinlerin çözümlenmesi aşamasında, çeviri eylemine yönelik betimleyici bir anlayış geliştirebilmek amacıyla, Raymond van den Broeck'in modelinden faydalanılmaktadır. Buna ek olarak makale, metonimi kavramı bağlamında, Maria Tymoczko'nun konu hakkında kaleme aldığı kuramsal yazılarından yararlanarak, erek metnin, metonimi kavramı ışığında biçemselsel açıdan çözümlenmesine zemin hazırlamak için sırasıyla, kaynak metnin ve kaynak metinle aynı adı taşıyan ikinci bölümünün metonimik özelliklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, *Öksüz Brooklyn*'den seçilen pasajlar üzerine odaklanan çalışma, okura, Sabri Gürses'in çevirisinin biçemselsel açıdan bir çözümlemesini sunarak, Lethem'in romanlarında geliştirdiği biçemi Türkçe çevirisinden izleme olanağı vermektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Biçem, biçembilim, metonimi, Jonathan Lethem, çeviri kararları.

## Introduction

It would not be an overstatement to consider *style* as a peculiar characteristic of a given person. Even in daily spoken language one can think of the notion of communicative style and its prospective effects during the course of a conversation. The situation, the mood, the emotions, the atmosphere surrounding the dialogue might give clues for one in order to discern the speaking style of the people who take part in the conversation. Yet, written language, which is an entirely different realm of language from the one of spoken language, suggests itself as a unique field to study the notion of style. Because written language itself is a “careful, elaborated, shuffled, pruned and tidied form of language” (Turner 1973: 8), there is more room to analyse style in written language when compared to spoken language. Still, for a sound study of style both in written language and in spoken language, one notion has priority over everything: context.

“Context is everything” (1999: 1), writes Brooklyn-born American author Jonathan Lethem at the beginning of his stunning novel *Motherless Brooklyn*,

and makes his readers pause for a second to ponder upon the deep sense embodied within the sentence. When the crucial function that the notion of context acquires within any given discussion on language is taken into account, one can infer how Lethem demands from his readers first and foremost to read *Motherless Brooklyn* within the context of language.

A general look at *Motherless Brooklyn* from this viewpoint indicates that Lethem's astute remark regarding context –as well as language– becomes the recurring leitmotiv of the novel. Because the main character of the novel, Lionel Essrog is a protagonist with *Tourette syndrome*, who cannot impede himself from tapping around the shoulders of people when talking, and constantly showing ceaseless verbal tics as well as physical twitches, the notion of language becomes the crux of *Motherless Brooklyn*. Vocal tics and motor tics are indeed the most extreme exposures of *Tourette syndrome* and they are “characterized by grunts, snorts and throat clearing as well as by more linguistic manifestations, such as coprolalia, palilalia, and echolalia. Nonlinguistic sounds, such as grunts, squeals, and hisses, appear to be related to involuntary diaphragmatic contractions and may be actual extensions of motor tics” (Mansdorf 2001: 325). When these characterizations are borne in mind in the light of the Touretic condition of Lionel Essrog, one can observe how the character manifests himself through language throughout the novel. Since stylistics is “part of linguistics which concentrates on variation in the use of language, often, but not exclusively, with special attention to the most conscious and complex uses of language in literature” (Turner 1973: 7), and since Lionel Essrog's verbal outbursts comprise complex uses of language to a certain degree, *Motherless Brooklyn* suggests itself as a novel which calls for a stylistic analysis.

Nevertheless, this paper will not offer a stylistic analysis of *Motherless Brooklyn*.<sup>1</sup> Instead, it will attempt to trace the distinctive style that Jonathan Lethem attains in *Motherless Brooklyn* through the Turkish translation of the novel: *Öksüz Brooklyn* (2004), translated by Sabri Gürses. To what extent does the target text, *Öksüz Brooklyn*, resonate with the style of the source text, *Motherless Brooklyn*, will be the central focus of this paper. In order to dwell

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<sup>1</sup> It goes without saying that this paper has no intention of discarding the source text analysis. One way or another, during the course of analysing the target text items in the later sections of the paper, the source text analysis will come into play. This is inevitable. Since one of the goals of this study is to follow the traces of *Motherless Brooklyn* through *Öksüz Brooklyn*, this paper will seek to offer the source text analysis in the light of the examination of the target text items.

upon this issue, this paper will focus on the second chapter of *Motherless Brooklyn* and regard it as the “heart” of the novel in the light of the notion of metonymics; it will provide an analysis of the excerpts pertaining to the second chapter of the target text from the perspective of stylistics. In the course of tracing Jonathan Lethem’s style, this study will attempt to “deal with the ‘hows’, the ‘whys and wherefores’” (van den Broeck 1985: 58) of the Turkish translation of *Motherless Brooklyn*. Although Jonathan Lethem’s fictional works are widely recognized and read in the world, the author is scarcely known in the Turkish academia,<sup>2</sup> and as a matter of fact, barely read and analyzed from a scholarly perspective. In this respect, this paper will attempt to introduce Jonathan Lethem to the academic world with the purpose of shifting the focus of attention from canonical works of world literature to the ones of contemporary literature through *Motherless Brooklyn*.

### **Metonymics and Aspect/s of Marginalization in *Motherless Brooklyn***

As Maria Tymoczko has shown, the metonymic aspect/s of any given text become quite distinctive when one thinks of translations from a non-canonical literature to a canonical or a marginalized literature (cf. 1995: 12, 1999: 47).<sup>3</sup> Even though *Motherless Brooklyn* pertains to a canonical literary system of the Western literature, the work is representative of marginalization of a particular literature in many respects. A brief glance at the peculiarities of the major character of the novel Lionel Essrog, fortifies this argument to a certain extent. Afflicted with *Tourette syndrome*, Essrog bears the features of a character pertaining to the *geek genre*, “in which an incredibly sensitive, beautiful main character is misunderstood by everyone.” (Lethem quoted in Schiff 2006: 124). In opposition to the way that Essrog is treated by the other personae of the novel, the reader is more likely to sympathize with Lionel and tries to

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<sup>2</sup> However, this is not peculiar to Turkish academia, it holds true for the academic world in general. In opposition to the wide number of interviews, reviews and brief critical analyses on Jonathan Lethem, all of which can be accessed online, one can hardly find a comprehensive scholarly work on Lethem. The only exception might be, Peacock (2007: 90-100) in which the writer provides a firm analysis of Jonathan Lethem’s first two novels, that is to say, *Gun, With Occasional Music* (1994) and *Amnesia Moon* (1995) from the viewpoint of “genre shifting.” In addition to that, Sørensen (2008) provides a sound analysis of the notions of identification and Jewishness in *Motherless Brooklyn*.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that Tymoczko’s arguments regarding the concepts of “non-canonical literature” and “marginalized culture” stand for the Irish literature and its position within a post-colonial context. Be that as it may, the scholar acknowledges that there are many types of non-canonical or marginalized literatures, and leaves a room for a discussion of the other types of marginalized literatures (cf. 1995: 11-13). The approach to be developed in this paper with respect to the marginalized features of *Motherless Brooklyn* should be taken into consideration within this context.

understand his *Tourettic* condition. Lionel's Tourettic impulses compel him to count every single detail around him, tap around the shoulders of people, shout, and even bark. Through Essrog's verbal outbursts, all of which end up with deriving words from the contexts surrounding him, the marginalized aspect of *Motherless Brooklyn* manifests itself. Even though the novel is written in line with the traditional structure of a detective story, Lionel Essrog's condition marginalizes the text and separates the work from the crime fiction tradition. From this point of view, it is most probable for one to observe how the (fictitious) internal situation of Lionel Essrog, that is to say, marginalization of a specific character is equated with the external situation of the novel, that is, the marginalization of a particular literary work. What is more, Lethem's usage of *Tourette syndrome* as, "a master metaphor for postmodern American society, and for the problems inherent in finding or constructing a stable identity in such conditions" (Sørensen 2008), offers a chance for a reading of the novel from a sociological perspective.

As the title of the novel indicates, *Motherless Brooklyn* includes specific socio-cultural elements peculiar to Brooklyn (i.e. the tension between black and white people, auto services, sidewalks, street games, the subway culture, New York's street language, and so forth), most of which can provide the basis for a discussion of the novel in the view of the notion of metonymics. Metonymy, according to the *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, is defined as "a figure of speech that consists in using the name of one thing for that of something else with which it is associated" (quoted in Leech: 1969 152). Yet, when this definition is taken into consideration in line with the representative features of *Motherless Brooklyn*, the borderlines of this general definition expand beyond the linguistic concerns.<sup>4</sup> In the case of *Motherless Brooklyn*, the aforementioned specific socio-cultural elements inherent in the novel become metonymic and make the work Brooklyn itself (cf. Tymoczko 1999: 55).<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Brooklyn does not only function as a backdrop in Lethem's novel, but also acts as a living character of the work with its diverse and vivid socio-cultural elements.

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<sup>4</sup> At this point of discussion, it should be noted that the notion of metonymics will be associated with the features that can be representative of *Motherless Brooklyn*. In so doing, this paper will attempt to broaden the definition of metonymics by making use of it beyond the linguistic concerns.

<sup>5</sup> For an in depth analysis of the notion of metonymics and its usage in modern writing along with its theoretical discussion, see Lodge 1977: 73-124.

The second chapter of the novel, namely, “Motherless Brooklyn”, constitutes the “eye” (cf. Boase-Beier 2006: 93, 131) of the entire text, owing to the fact that the socio-cultural elements of Brooklyn, the background of the characters, as well as the notion of language are all depicted with great detail in this chapter. Whereas *Motherless Brooklyn*’s metonymic aspect lies beneath its feature of being representative of Brooklyn, “Motherless Brooklyn”’s metonymic facet manifests itself in the passages in which the notion of language is described. As mentioned earlier, the novel itself demands to be read within the context of language. Since Lionel Essrog’s obsession with language, his verbal outbursts together with his other exceptional characteristics are introduced in this specific chapter to the readers, and since Lionel Essrog “finds” the language and learns to “speak” through Frank Minna and Court Street (cf. Lethem 1999: 37), “Motherless Brooklyn” constitutes the heart of *Motherless Brooklyn*. Therefore, “Motherless Brooklyn” stands not only for Brooklyn itself, but also for the entire novel. As Tymoczko observes, “the way in which a literary text metonymically represents features of its literary system and ultimately features of its culture makes translating a text of a marginalized culture so difficult” (1995: 17), and in the light of this comment, one can see how a stylistic analysis of the Turkish translation of *Motherless Brooklyn* can provide fruitful discussions regarding the role of style during a given translation process. Furthermore, pinpointing the metonymic aspects of a particular literary work –as well as the translation of this specific work– has the potential of opening a new dimension in terms of developing a holistic approach to the study and practice of translation.

### **A Stylistic Approach to Öksüz Brooklyn**

Despite the fact that the studies undertaken within the context of contemporary understanding of the study and practice of translation draws heavily on descriptive approaches developed within the realm of Translation Studies, the amount of models that can be taken as a yardstick during the course of analyzing *style* in translated texts is sparse. One exception, in this regard, might be Raymond van den Broeck’s model which was proposed in 1985. A significant point that merits further attention in Raymond van den Broeck’s model is the fact that, the comparative analysis part of it appeals for the prospective benefits that stylistics might offer to the translation researcher (1985: 58). As a matter of fact, in due course, the model itself has been a source of inspiration for scholars in terms of describing the functions of translated texts

in a given target culture. Yet, when the model is read with a critical eye, one can infer how the comparative analysis part of the model in question takes the source text as a starting point (*ibid.*) and benefits from the concept of the traditional source-oriented approach in the course of analyzing a translated text. Taking the target text as a point of departure in its own right, however, would be a firm step to take in the sense of developing a target-oriented approach to the study and practice of translation. One additional point that deserves mentioning is Raymond van den Broeck's model's tendency to regard the translator as of secondary importance. Indeed, a close reading of the model might give rise to the conclusion that, the background of a given translator, the affinities of a particular translator with the theoretical field of translation, as well as issues related with translators, have been disregarded to some extent. Therefore, prior to the stylistic analysis of *Öksüz Brooklyn*, it would be reasonable to provide some information with respect to the translator of *Motherless Brooklyn*, Sabri Gürses so as to present a re-reading of Raymond van den Broeck's model.

*Motherless Brooklyn* was translated by Sabri Gürses as *Öksüz Brooklyn* and the novel was published by Plan B Publishing Company in 2004. In addition to his translations from English, Sabri Gürses has translated works of challenging writers of Russian Literature, such as Ivan Sergejevich Turgenev and Andrei Bely. Particularly, Sabri Gürses' translation of Andrei Bely's novel entitled *Petersburg* deserves further attention due to the fact that this novel is chiefly regarded as the contemporary of one of the most inspiring novels of the twentieth century: James Joyce's *Ulysses* (cf. Cooke 1985: 585). Arguably, moreover, Sabri Gürses' position as a translator brings into focus one of the argument points that Jean Boase-Beier highlights in her *Stylistic Approaches to Translation*: "knowledge of possible and actual theories and views, of language, literature, translation or style, is as helpful to the translator as any other knowledge about the world in which s/he lives and operates" (2006: 6). In the light of this information with respect to Sabri Gürses, one can turn to his translation of *Öksüz Brooklyn* so as to discern how stylistic awareness might acquire a crucial role in a given translation process.

As argued previously, the second chapter of *Öksüz Brooklyn* becomes metonymic owing to the fact that socio-cultural elements pertaining to Brooklyn, the environment in which the novel characters have grown up are all described in great detail. In "Öksüz Brooklyn", the reader finds the unique

chance to feel the marginalized facet of old Brooklyn which is described as, “a neighborhood political machine with pizzeria and butcher-shop bosses and unwritten rules everywhere” (Lethem 1999: 55). The place, in which the main character of the novel Lionel Essrog has grown up, is depicted as a remote land from the rest of Brooklyn. Take, for instance, the beginning part of the chapter:

St. Vincent Erkekler Yurdu'nun kütüphanesinde büyüdüm ben, hiçbir planlamacının kaliteli, bakımlı bir semt kurmaya kalkışmak istemediği bir kısmında büyüdüm Brooklyn'in; ne tam Brooklyn Heights, ne Cobble Hill, hatta Boerum Hill bile değil. Yurt aslında Brooklyn Köprüsü'ne çıkan bir yan yol üstünde kurulmuştu ama ne köprüden görünüyordu ne de Manhattan'dan; iki tarafında gri, ve uzak görünseler de bizim Çocuklar'dan bazılarının girip içeri gördüğü, ruhsuz, devasa hukuk mahkemesi binalarının sıralandığı sekiz şeritli trafiğin yanı başında; bütün gece boyunca vızıldayan, yanıp sönen, mektup denen o gizemli nesnelere dağ gibi yüklenmiş kamyonları içeri almak için kapılarını homurdana homurdana açan bir binanın, Brooklyn Postanesi merkezi sınıflama ek binasının hemen yanında; günde iki kez “sandviç ve bira” molalarıyla bölünecek, sıkıcı, dümdüz bir yaşam geçirmeye hazırlanan, hemen yanındaki ufucuk **meyhaneyi** tika basa dolduran, gelip geçenleri ürkütüp aksi haydutlar olarak saldırdıkları namla bizi, Çocuklar'ı tedirgin eden kaba saba öğrencilerin mekanı olan Burton Motor Meslek Lisesi'nin **orada**; Lafayette'in Brooklyn Savaşı'na katıldığı noktayı gösteren mermer büstün altındaki ıssız bankların **orada**; geniş dikenli tel kıvrımları ve rüzgarın kırbaçladığı fosforlu bayraklarla örtülmüş yüksek bir parmaklığın çevrelediği bir otoparkın ve herhalde dört bir yan çiftlik olduğu zamanlar da orada olan kırmızı tuğlalı bir Quaker Toplantı Evi'nin **orada**. Kısacası, eskimiş, antika ilçemizin pıhtılaşmış girişindeki bu karmaşa, resmi olarak Hiçbir Yer'di, Başka Bir Yer'e geçerken bilhassa görmezlikten gelinen bir yer. Frank Minna tarafından kurtarılmaya dek, dediğim gibi, kütüphanede yaşıyordum ben.

(Gürses 2004: 50-51, emphasis added)

A general glance at the Turkish translation, introduces the reader to the shrouded, the neglected, the ignored part of Brooklyn in which the novel characters have grown up. As Tymoczko points out, “names are often among the semiotic elements of a text that are the most urgent to transpose and at the same time the most problematic to translate, in part because their semiotic significance is so often culturally specific and dependent on cultural paradigms” (1999: 223-224). Gürses' translation chooses to acquaint the Turkish readers with local names of Brooklyn all of which could be easily translated into Turkish. Yet Gürses, by complying with the context of the paragraph, chooses to leave the local names of Brooklyn as they are with the purpose of conveying the socio-cultural elements embedded in place names, such as Boerum Hill,



which derives from the colonial farm of the Boerum family which inhabited most of the area in history (cf. Morrone 2001: 331), to the Turkish readers. Nonetheless, as far as the phonetic structure of the Turkish language along with the current situation of the Turkish language –particularly the one in written language– are concerned, one can infer how Gürses’ translation pinpoints one crucial aspect that merits mentioning: the notion of the circumflex accent. Words like, “mekan” and “rüzgar” both of which lack the circumflex accent here in translation, actually indicate one of the differences between the spoken and the written language, and how studying the translator’s style in written language offers the unique chance to spot the notions that are currently at stake regarding the target language, Turkish. For example, words like “hala”, (standing for “father’s sister”) and “hâlâ”, (standing for either “still” or “yet”), both of which have the same phonetic structure with “mekan” and “rüzgar”, without the usage of the circumflex accent can pose a serious threat on the written language due to the fact that the circumflex accent –in opposition to the situation in spoken language in which the difference can easily be given through intonation– is the only possible way to give the phonetic difference between the words as such.

A look at the way in which Lethem begins the chapter might give a better understanding of Gürses’ word choices and his translation strategy:

I grew up in the library of St. Vincent’s Home for Boys, in the part of downtown Brooklyn no developer yet wishes to claim for some upscale, renovated neighborhood; not quite Brooklyn Heights, nor Cobble Hill, not even Boerum Hill. The Home is essentially set on the off-ramp to the Brooklyn Bridge, but out of sight of Manhattan or the bridge itself, on eight lanes of traffic lined with faceless, monolithic civil courts, which, gray and distant though they seemed, some of us Boys had seen the insides of, by Brooklyn’s central sorting annex for the post office, a building that hummed and blinked all through the night, its gates groaning open to admit trucks bearing mountains of those mysterious items called letters, **by** the Burton Trade School for Automechanics, where hardened students attempting to set their lives dully straight spilled out twice a day for the **sandwich-and-beer** breaks, overwhelming the cramped **bodega** next door, intimidating passersby and thrilling us Boys in their morose thuggish glory, **by** a desolate strip of park benches beneath a granite bust of Lafayette, indicating his point of entry into the battle of Brooklyn, **by** a car lot surrounded by a high fence topped with wide curls of barbed wire and wind-whipped fluorescent flags, and by a redbrick Quaker Meetinghouse that had presumably been there when the rest was farmland. In short, this jumble of stuff at the clotted entrance to the ancient, battered borough was officially Nowhere, a place strenuously ignored

in passing through to Somewhere Else. Until rescued by Frank Minna I lived,  
as I said, in the library.

(Lethem 1999: 36-37, emphasis added)

“Choice”, writes Jean Boase-Beier, “whether seen as more or less restricted has always been a central issue for stylistics” (2006: 51). When this statement is taken into consideration in line with Sabri Gürses’ translation, one can see how Jonathan Lethem depicts the gloomy atmosphere of St. Vincent’s Home for Boys, how the place itself is concealed within Brooklyn and to a certain extent invisible not only for Brooklyn but also for Manhattan as well. Gürses’ translation bears the style that Lethem attains through the usage of preposition “by” in the paragraph, or precisely speaking, in the long sentence which is the core of the paragraph. Gürses, instead of choosing to translate the preposition “by” as “yakınında” or “yanında”, opts to render it with the preposition “*orada*”. In this respect, Gürses, being the writer of the TT, makes a stylistic reading of the ST (cf. *ibid.*: 50), and gives priority to the very preposition “*orada*” which can make the reader feel the presence of the huge gap existing between the St. Vincent’s Home for Boys and the rest of Brooklyn, Manhattan, New York; in short, the world in which there is no room for the Boys. By doing so, Gürses uses his knowledge of the audience and makes assumptions with respect to the cognitive situation of Jonathan Lethem with the aim of echoing the remoteness of the St. Vincent’s Home for Boys in the TT (cf. Gutt 2000: 384 with Sperber and Wilson 1996: 272). Gürses’ choice regarding the word “*bodega*” deserves mentioning within this context. While “*bodega*” could easily be rendered as “*bakkal*” or “*şarap dükkânı*”, is translated as “*meyhane*”, a word that strengthens the boasting image of the hardened students of the Burton Trade School for Automechanics both in the eyes of the Boys and in the eyes of the reader/s. Furthermore, Sabri Gürses’ translation also brings forth the notion of foregrounding which has close associations with the style of the ST. Although, Boase-Beier is in favour of considering “repetition as a particularly strong case of foregrounding” (2006: 92), there is always room in a given translation project to use various foregrounding strategies. Gürses, for instance, puts sandwich-and-beer breaks into quotation marks in his TT as “*sandviç ve bira*”, hence foregrounds the image that the ST creates in the eyes of its readers.

What is more, “Öksüz Brooklyn” provides the state of mind in which Lionel Essrog becomes obsessed with language:

Bay Kassel'in kütüphaneden çıkartıp Minna'ya sunduğu soluk benizli on üçlük velet, yeri dövme, ıslık çalma, dil şaklatma, göz kırpma, hızla baş çevirme ve duvarı yumruklama türünden, kendine has Tourette'li beynimin en sevdiği doğrudan ifadelere kabiliyetliydi. Artık dil içimde kabarıyor, donmuş deniz eriyordu ama onu dışarı salmak tehlikeli görünüyordu. Amaç konuşmaktı ve ben deliliğimin ne kadar amaçlı olduğunu, ne başkasına ne de kendime söyleyemiyordum. Kıç üstü düşmeler, gülünç hareketler, bunlar kaza eseri deliliklerdi, az çok bağışlanabilir şeylerdi. Tam olarak söylemek gerekirse, **Leshawn Montrose**'un koluna vurmak, hatta onu öpmek bir şeydi, dosdoğru ona yanaşıp suratına **Perişan Marangoz**, **Leşalan Monokoz** ya da **Siktir Maydanoz** demek başka bir şeydi.

(Gürses 2004: 64, emphasis added)

Since a literary work –any given literary work– is a product of mind, that is to say, a product of a particular psychological situation; it is most probable for the reader to track down the style of a given author in a literary text. What becomes fascinating during the course of a translation process, on the other hand, is the fact that translation itself can also provide the unique chance to grasp the state of mind of the ST author, because the translator is the decisive reader of the ST in the first place (cf. Boase-Beier 2006: 54, 75, esp. 54) and s/he has the potential of conveying the state of mind of the ST author with the purpose of changing the mind of the readers to a certain degree. As Boase-Beier argues, “(i) by acquainting us with thoughts or feelings we had not experienced or reflected on, or known to exist; (ii) by showing us that other people experience them; (iii) by allowing us to experience those thoughts or feelings for ourselves” (*ibid.*: 2006: 78), translated literature has the possibility of altering the minds of its readers. When Gürses' translation is taken into consideration from this viewpoint, one can see how it introduces an entirely different state of mind to the readers: a brain with *Tourette syndrome*. It becomes possible for the reader, to know what *Tourette syndrome* is, what its prospective effects can be. At this point of discussion, it would be reasonable to embark on a slight digression regarding Jonathan Lethem's comments on *Tourette syndrome* and its potential effects on his writing process. “*Motherless Brooklyn*”, says Lethem, “has its own very prominent hook or concept, but the voice was so much an outpouring of emotion and enthusiasm. It was kind of a crazy Valentine to Brooklyn and the Tourettic parts of my own personality, the chaotic instinct for destroying language and reconfiguring it in a vaguely Joycean way. I was just embracing stuff wildly. It's like a big wet kiss, that

book. It's still a lot more emotional and much freer than the earlier work" ("The Long Way Home").

Consulting Lethem's *Tourettic* parts that echo themselves in Gürses' translation would offer the chance to examine some stylistic aspects in terms of the translator's creativity:

The pale thirteen-year-old that Mr. Kassel pulled out of the library and offered to Minna was prone to floor-tapping, whistling, tongue-clicking, winking, rapid head turns, and wall-stroking, anything but the direct utterances for which my particular Tourette's brain most yearned. Language bubbled inside me now, the frozen sea melting, but it felt too dangerous to let out. Speech was intention, and I couldn't let anyone else or myself know how intentional my craziness felt. Pratfalls, antics –those were accidental lunacy, and more or less forgivable. Practically speaking, it was one thing to stroke **Leshawn Montrose's** arm, or even to kiss him, another entirely to walk up and call him **Shefawn Mongoose**, or **Lefthand Moonprose**, or **Fuckyou Roseprawn**.

(Lethem 1999: 47, emphasis added)

The excerpt taken from *Motherless Brooklyn*, actually, provides the reader/s with what is inherent in the novel. Lethem, through Lionel Essrog –as well as his Tourettic parts– derives words from the contexts that do not exist in the English language. The contexts, however, are dependent on the words that can trigger Lionel's *Tourette syndrome*. The compound nouns derived from Leshawn Montrose's name –Shefawn Mongoose, Lefthand Moonprose, and Fuckyou Roseprawn– do not make that much sense as compound nouns in the English language. The reader of the ST can only get the gist of the puns through paying close attention to the phonetic structure of Leshawn Montrose. When the Turkish translation of this excerpt is taken into account within this context, one can infer how Gürses, through concentrating on the phonetic structure of Leshawn Montrose, derives words that do not exist in the Turkish language (i.e. "Perişan Marangoz", "Leşalan Monokoz" and "Siktir Maydanoz"), hence achieves –more or less– the same effect that Lethem creates upon his readers. Furthermore, by doing so, Gürses conveys the rhyme inherent in this part of Lethem's text to the TT, and creates his own stylistic effects with the purpose of recreating the same impact on the readers in order to make them experience the same cognitive process which Lethem and Gürses had been through (cf. Boase-Beier 2006: 63).

The same holds true when rendering this dialogue, with further creativity on Gürses' part:

“Hiç kendini dinliyor musun, Lionel?” derdi Minna sonra, başını sallayarak,  
“Sen gerçekten de **kahrolası fırlamanın tekisin.**”

“**Nikah olmasa damadın gelinisin!** Neden bilmiyorum, ben sadece *–siktiret!–* duramıyorum işte.”

“Sen bir ucube şovsun, neden bu. Canlı ucube şov hem de sudan ucuz. Halka açık.”

“**Ucuzacube!**” Omzuna vuruyorum.

“Dedim ya: ucuz canlı ucube şov.”

(Gürses 2004: 77, emphasis added)

“You ever listen to yourself, Lionel?” Minna would say later, shaking his head.  
“You really are **shot out of a fucking cannon.**”

“**Scott out of the Canyon!** I don't know why, I just *–fuckitup!–* I just can't stop.”

“You're a freak show, that's why. Human freak show, and it's free. Free to the public.”

“**Freefreak!**” I hit him on the shoulder.

“That's what I said: a free human freak show.”

(Lethem 1999: 57-58, emphasis added)

A close glance at Gürses' translation indicates that, this time the translator has taken the phonetic structure of the Turkish language as focal point and attains the word string that Lethem derives from his TT, that is to say, from the phonetics of “kahrolası fırlamanın tekisin” and “nikah olmasa damadın gelinisin”. In a similar vein, neither “kahrolası fırlamanın tekisin” and “nikah olmasa damadın gelinisin” nor “shot out of a fucking cannon” and “Scott out of the Canyon” do not exist in the source and the target languages, being English and Turkish respectively. The humour together with the word play, stemming from *Tourette syndrome* can solely be grasped by the reader through paying close attention to the phonetic structure of the words in the text/s. Within this context, it can be inferred how Gürses gives priority to the phonetic structure of the language of his text, being Turkish. Contrastingly, however, the other word play –“ucuzacube”– was rendered in line with the phonetic structure of the English word “Freefreak”. From this vantage point, Gürses' attempt can be

regarded as a step taken to reflect Lethem's style through focusing on the phonetic structures on both of the languages.

### **Conclusion**

In *Motherless Brooklyn*, Jonathan Lethem attains a peculiar style through the employment of *Tourette syndrome* that might pose a serious challenge to the translator. In a manner evoking the main character of the novel, namely Lionel Essrog who must "continually struggle to resist the syndrome" (Schwartz 2002: 138), the translator is in the position of struggling of conveying the style of Lethem through paying compulsive attention to the details of the ST. Yet, as the analysis provided in this paper hopefully has shown, the Turkish translation of the novel seems to resonate with the distinctive style of Jonathan Lethem to a certain extent. In this sense, the analysis provided in this paper can stand for both *Motherless Brooklyn* and *Öksüz Brooklyn*. The translator of the novel Sabri Gürses, by paying close attention to the socio-cultural elements pertaining to Brooklyn, introduces the Turkish readers the shrouded, the ignored, the overshadowed part of Brooklyn in which the main characters of the novel have grown up and have embarked on their journeys.

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### Internet Resources

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