

Translation as a Form of Social Representation and the Case Of Re-Introducing Karagöz to Turkish Readers: Karagöz Adaptations of Ismail Hakki Baltacıođlu and Aziz Nesin *

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Introduction

The development of Turkish Theatre in the Western sense is a rather recent phenomenon and dates back to the early years of the Tanzimat (Reorganization) Period. Starting with the Tanzimat Period, Turkish society had the unique experience of being exposed to an almost two-thousand-year-old tradition very suddenly¹ and without context; the form of Western theatre was exported without close examination of what constituted its content. Even so, this initial step of coming to terms with the “West” would in the long run prove to be quite fruitful during the modernisation process of the Turkish Republic. One consequence of this exposure to certain theatrical traditions was that modernisation then became the dominant political view of the Turkish ruling class after the Tanzimat Period. In this sense, the form of Western theatre may well have been the most appropriate way of extending the modernist ideology into society. To a certain extent, the Westernisation movement starting with the Tanzimat Period has given rise to a binary opposition² in the Turkish culture. This cultural

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¹ Of course, the experience of Turkish society with Western theatre is a consequence of a series of encounters with the theatre practices undertaken in the Western sense. The performances of Western theatre adaptations through a different channel alongside with those of Traditional Turkish Theatre forms took place in the first half of the nineteenth century. Even though these performances of Western theatre have initially been individual and exceptional ones, thanks to the first wave of drama translations and adaptations undertaken during the 1860s, theatre practices in the Western sense gained impetus in the Ottoman society. For a comprehensive account regarding the rise of the drama by means of translations, adaptations, as well as performances in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Saliha Paker, “Turkey: The Age of Translation and Adaptation, 1850-1914”, in **Modern Literature in the Near and Middle East 1850-1970**, Robin Ostle (ed.), London and New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 25-29

² See, Baykan Sezer, **Türk Sosyolojisinin Ana Sorunları**, İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2006, p. 158. This cultural binary opposition is by no means limited to theatre, it can also be observed in the educational institutions, in the field of literature, law and social thought.

binary opposition manifests itself in the development process of the synchronic theatre performances in the Western sense, as well as the performances of Traditional Turkish Theatre forms.

In the early years of the Republican Period, the theatre became a pulpit for the proclamation of the ideas of the modernist ideology. Its purpose was to make the illiterate people³ of the newly established country conscious of the path that the Republic had chosen. At the same time, as the Ottoman society gradually became acquainted with the Western theatre, the status of Traditional Turkish Theatre forms started to fall from grace. The two forms of theatre in question were founded on the opposite poles: whereas the Western theatre tradition was text based, Traditional Turkish Theatre forms—such as Meddah (Storyteller), Karagöz (Shadow Theatre), Ortaoyunu (Arena Theatre), Kukla Oyunu (Puppet Theatre), and Köy Seyirlik Oyunları (Village Spectacles)—were based on oral tradition. Aziz Çalışlar rightly observes that, “*the biggest ‘misfortune’ which Turkish society had been through, was to experience historical diachrony, historical inequality and historical incompatibility*”⁴ * at the turning points of its history. For instance, in the nineteenth century, theatre in the Western world was in the position of scrutinising its dynamics with the intention to save “theatre” from its “decadent” situation: Ibsen’s social plays, Strindberg’s expressionistic “dream” dramaturgy, not to mention Richard Wagner’s concept of “total theatre” were all directed towards creating the artwork of the future.⁵ Turkish society, however, was desirous of adapting the already-established forms of theatre from the West, forms that were already considered as “decadent” by the nineteenth century Western theatrical artists themselves.

As a consequence of the attempts of the theatrical artists of the preceding century, theatre in the Western world started to move towards an abstract style of expression which

³ At this juncture, it is worth pointing out that the Westernisation movement was an inclusive project. The ultimate goal of the movement was also aimed at the elite and civic sections of the Turkish society. Be that as it may, particular emphasis has been put on educating the illiterate people of the country through theatre. The performances undertaken in the Village Institutes and People’s Houses can be taken as a token of this tendency in the early years of the Republican Period. See, Osman Kafadar, **Türk Eğitim Düşüncesinde Batılılaşma**, Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 1997, pp. 292-318

⁴ Aziz Çalışlar, **20. Yüzyılda Tiyatro**, İstanbul: Mitos Boyut, 1993, p. 23

* Unless indicated, all translations are my own.

⁵ Cf. Burç İdem Dinçel, “Bütüncül Tiyatro Anlayışının Belirgin Örnekleri: *Peer Gynt* ve *Rüya Oyunu*”, in **Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi** 7, İstanbul: İstanbul University Press, 2005 pp. 96-97

seriously questioned the existence of a “text” in a given theatre production. To a certain extent, the means of attaining this abstract style of expression go hand in hand with the structure of the Traditional Turkish Theatre forms which are comprised of performances in the open air, the notions of improvisation and theatricality, the usage of music and dance, and so on. Nevertheless, until the 1940s, the features that both Traditional Turkish Theatre forms and Western theatre forms shared in common were either neglected or dismissed as “primeval” art forms by the Turkish theatre authorities and critics. The Republican Period together with the years following it witnessed a heated debate between these two opposing approaches with respect to the route that Turkish Theatre should follow. As Nurhan Tekerek puts it, “*one of [these] approaches favoured ‘westernization’ [sic.] by way of mere imitation. The second approach advocated a synthesis of western theatrical styles with the traditional performance styles characteristic of Turkey*”.⁶

The ultimate goal of the proponents of the second approach was to take theatre back to its roots, that is to say, to give it back to Turkish society through the combination of traditional and the contemporary theatre forms. As a matter of fact, serious attempts were made in terms of representing the Traditional Turkish Theatre forms by means of adaptations in the course of time. Two particular names, in this respect, deserve further attention because of the approaches they developed within one of the most noteworthy forms of Traditional Turkish Theatre, namely, Karagöz: İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıođlu (1889-1978), an educator and playwright, and Aziz Nesin (1915-1995), a playwright and humorist. Baltacıođlu, who has written abundant number of theoretical and practical works on theatre, is regarded as one of the most creative theatre theoreticians of Turkish Theatre.⁷ His theory of “essential theatre”,⁸

⁶ Nurhan Tekerek, “Tiyatromuzun Modern Tiyatroyla Kesişmesi Yolunda Gelenekselin Önemi ve Baltacıođlu’ndan Bir Deneme: *Kafa Tamircisi*”, in *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi* 17, Ankara: Ankara University Press, 2004, pp. 35-49

⁷ Cf. Metin And, “Ataç’ın Tiyatroyla İlgisi”, in *Kitap-lık* 48, 2001, p. 113; Dikmen Gürün, “1950’ler ve Tiyatro Sanatının Yönelimleri”, in *İstanbul Üniversitesi Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi* 3, İstanbul: İstanbul University Press, 2003, p. 62; Kerem Karabođa, “Medeniyet, Milliyet ve Baltacıođlu’nun ‘Öz Tiyatro’su’”, in *İstanbul Üniversitesi Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi* 10, İstanbul: İstanbul University Press, 2007, pp. 3-19; Yavuz Pekman, *Çađdaş Tiyatromuzda Geleneksellik*, İstanbul: Mitos Boyut, 2002, pp. 196-197; Yavuz Pekman, “Türk Tiyatrosunda Çađdaş Bir Kuramcı: İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıođlu”, in *İstanbul Üniversitesi Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi* 3, İstanbul: İstanbul University Press, 2003, pp. 64-78; Nurhan Tekerek, “Tiyatromuzun Modern Tiyatroyla Kesişmesi Yolunda Gelenekselin

together with the applications of his theory in the plays that he has written, shifted the attention of Turkish society from text-based Western theatre back to the Traditional Turkish Theatre forms. The most significant attempts of Baltacıoğlu regarding his attempts of modernising Karagöz can be observed in his play *Karagöz Ankara'da* (henceforth *Karagöz in Ankara*) which was written in 1940.

The prominent playwright and humorist Nesin, on the other hand, “by way of scrutinising the comical, satirical, theatrical and the open structure of the elements of the Traditional Turkish Theatre forms, such as *Meddah, Karagöz and Ortaoyunu*”,⁹ developed an original approach to the understanding of Karagöz in the late 1960s. Thanks to the work of Baltacıoğlu and Nesin in modernising Karagöz, there was a significance increase in interest in Traditional Turkish Theatre forms by Turkish society. Karagöz inspired such attention that even “a leading Turkish newspaper, *Milliyet*, opened a competition for new Karagöz texts in 1968, in which each participant was expected to contribute three scenarios”.¹⁰ The winner of this competition was Aziz Nesin with his work *Üç Karagöz Oyunu* (henceforth *Three Karagöz Plays*) which was comprised of pieces entitled *Karagöz'ün Kaptanlığı* (henceforth *The Captaincy of Karagöz*), *Karagöz'ün Berberliği* (henceforth *The Hairdressing of Karagöz*) and *Karagöz'ün Antrenörlüğü* (henceforth *The Coaching of Karagöz*).

The fact that both *Karagöz in Ankara* and *Three Karagöz Plays* were adaptations merits further attention from the perspective of contemporary understanding of the study and practice of translation. Recent developments in Translation Studies,¹¹ have served to expand the demarcation lines that define the act of translation, and therefore it has become feasible to study almost any given version of a particular text as translation. The notion of adaptation, in this sense, becomes quite remarkable since the study of adaptations developed into a vast field

Önemi ve Baltacıoğlu'ndan Bir Deneme: *Kafa Tamircisi*”, in **Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi** 17, Ankara: Ankara University Press, 2004, pp. 35-49

⁸ İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, **Tiyatro Nedir**, Atila Alpöge, Turhan Yılmaz Ögüt and Ali Baltacıoğlu (eds.) İstanbul: Mitos Boyut, 2006, pp. 51-96

⁹ Ayşegül Yüksel, **Çağdaş Türk Tiyatrosundan On Yazar**, İstanbul: Mitos Boyut, 1997, p. 31

¹⁰ Metin And, **Karagöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre**, İstanbul: Dost, 1979, p. 94

¹¹ Gideon Toury's concept of “norms” and André Lefevere's notion of “re-writing,” together with Itamar Even-Zohar's “Polysystem Theory” can be considered as the pioneering examples which have extended the contemporary understanding of translation.

of discussion within Translation Studies.¹² As Susan Bassnett points out, “*much time and ink has been wasted attempting to differentiate between **translations, versions, adaptations** and the establishment of a hierarchy of ‘correctness’ between these categories*”.¹³ Bassnett’s remark highlights the futility of searching for a definition of translation within categories. Moreover, “*the emergence of Translation Studies as an independent discipline now enables us to study adaptation in its own terms*”,¹⁴ and thereby offers the opportunity to re-consider the notion of adaptation from a broader perspective.

From the vantage point of Karagöz adaptations, Georges L. Bastin’s comment becomes even more compelling; while the traditional method of adaptation takes as first and foremost the starting point of the written text, the adaptations of Baltacıoğlu and Nesin take a social phenomenon (that is to say, Karagöz) as its point of origin.¹⁵ This suggests that Karagöz must be viewed in its entirety, namely, as a social fact of the Ottoman society. Furthermore, as Bastin signifies, “*historians and scholars of translation take a negative view of adaptation, dismissing the phenomenon as distortion, falsification or censorship, but it is rare to find clear definitions of the terminology used in discussing this controversial concept*”.¹⁶ To the extent that it is possible for the term adaptation to cover any kind of re-writing, it becomes obligatory to set up an operational definition, “[a] concrete representation[s] of hypothetical construct[s]”,¹⁷ which can concretize the approach to be developed in this paper for a methodology to study Karagöz adaptations of İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu and Aziz Nesin.

¹² See for instance, Susan Bassnett, **Translation Studies**, London and New York: Routledge, 2004, pp. 124-131; André Lefevere, **Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame**. London and New York: Routledge, 1992, ch.6; Sirkku Aaltonen, **Time-Sharing on Stage**, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2000, pp. 64-95, and Phyllis Zatlin, **Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation**, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2005, pp. 79-82.

¹³ Susan Bassnett, **Translation Studies**, London and New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 81, emphasis in the original.

¹⁴ Georges L. Bastin, “Adaptation”, in **Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies**, Mona Baker (ed.), London and New York: Routledge, 1998, pp. 5-8

¹⁵ Indeed, adaptations acquire a significant role in the history of literature. Yet, Roman adaptations of Greek tragedies, Shakespeare’s adaptations of Roman and Greek fables, several versions of the Faustian legend, as well as Kafka adaptations in the twentieth century are all text-based. Although it is most probable for one to encounter with societal aspects of a given culture in these variants of adaptations, it becomes rather hard to regard their point of departure as a social phenomenon of a given culture.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6

¹⁷ Jr. Whitley, **Principles of Research in Behavioral Science**, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1996, p. 14

The fact that social representation theory revolves around the idea of interpreting any given social representation, “*as a social process of communication and discourse, in the course of which meanings and social objects are generated and elaborated*”¹⁸ makes the notion of translation a crucial—even central—aspect of social representation theory. Furthermore, since any given translation is composed of the elements of the society that it belongs to, one could approach Karagöz as a form of social representation thanks simply because it inscribes a role for each recognisable persona of the Ottoman Society during the course of the performance.

Keeping all of this in mind, the operational or functional definition of translation to be used for the purposes of this study will deem translation as a form of social representation, and regard Karagöz as a representative example of this kind of translation act. How the essence of Karagöz has been reflected in the adaptations of Baltacıoğlu and Nesin will be the central focus of this paper. In order to do so, this study will discuss the essential features of Karagöz which can bestow upon this Traditional Turkish Theatre element the role of translation, as well as a form of social representation, and then move on to the analyses of *Karagöz in Ankara* and *Three Karagöz Plays* by Baltacıoğlu and Nesin respectively with the purpose of providing a re-reading of Karagöz together with its repercussions in Turkey both in the 1940s and in the 1960s.

Translation as a Form of Social Representation

The significance of Traditional Turkish Theatre’s Karagöz is to be found in the vivid relationship between the spectator and the performer, a relationship that is created by the dynamic structure of the performances. As Metin And observes, “*its flexible form, that is, each episode is an entity in itself and independent so that in each different performance these episodes could change places, could be reduced, added to or subtracted from according to the audience’s reaction*”,¹⁹ is probably the most important feature of Karagöz plays. The act of

¹⁸ Wolfgang Wagner, “Description, Explanation and Method in Social Representation Research”, **Papers on Social Representations** Vol. 4 no. 2, 1995, p. 1

¹⁹ Metin And, **Karagöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre**, Istanbul: Dost, 1979, p. 76

communication through feedback and adaptation loops exists as a natural and integral part of Karagöz plays. From the vantage point of social representation theory, attributes shared by social individuals manifest themselves in their collective entities as a result of a translation process. Wolfgang Wagner argues that “*this translation process explains the coming into being of the social individual’s knowledge and representations by giving the details of their collective ecology*”.²⁰ The plots of Karagöz plays could come to grips with any given scene from social life in the course of the performance/s is indicative of the socio-cultural aspect of Karagöz plays, and allows one to follow the traces of the lives of Ottoman Empire individuals through the plays. This socio-cultural and communicative aspect, in fact, constitutes the core of Karagöz and is codified in the structure of the plays themselves.

Any given Karagöz play is comprised of three parts: *Mukaddeme* (prologue or introduction), *Muhavere* and *Ara Muhaveresi* (colloquy and interlude), and *Fasıl* (the main plot) which concludes with a brief finale that makes amends for any kind of transgressions during the performance and announces the next play.²¹ The setting of Karagöz is minimal: it can be either an introductory picture or a *göstermelik*²² (a screen ornament pinned to the linen cloth screen). In the prologue, Hacıvat, the unique companion of Karagöz, introduces himself with his song *semai*, by offering a prayer to God and also by praying on behalf of the Sultan. What is crucial here in the introduction is that Hacıvat says, “*what is to follow is not merely a shadow play but mirrors faithfully the world we live in and teaches much*”²³; this of course immediately focuses the attention of the spectators to the socio-cultural facts of the society in which they live. One could plausibly argue that this sets up and frames the sociological aspect of Karagöz plays, since the prologue is founded upon the verbal arguments of Karagöz and Hacıvat, which themselves are aimed at creating comic effects for the spectator. To some extent, the same argument holds true for the colloquy and interlude. However, in these parts, the essential feature of Karagöz plays evolves on the basis of repetitions, contrasts,

²⁰ Wolfgang Wagner, “Description, Explanation and Method in Social Representation Research”, **Papers on Social Representations** Vol. 4, no. 2, 1995, p. 13, emphasis in the original.

²¹ Cevdet Kudret, **Karagöz v. 1**, Ankara: Bilgi, 1968, pp. 18-22

²² For illustrations of the screen ornaments used in Karagöz plays, see Metin And, **Karagöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre**, Istanbul: Dost, 1979, pp. 60-64, and Metin And, **Drama at the Crossroads**, Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1991, p. 178

²³ Metin And, **Karagöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre**, Istanbul: Dost, 1979, p. 44

incongruities, misunderstandings and exaggerations between the shadow play characters. As Sevinç Sokullu observes, “[t]he daily life problems, such as poverty, unemployment and illiteracy is the main theme of every Karagöz play”,²⁴ and in the colloquy together with the interlude, one discovers hints about the difficulties that the members of Ottoman society may navigate. These hints might be somewhat concealed within the puns of Karagöz and Hacivat, but eventually in the main plot, the societal aspect of Karagöz re-surfaces through criticism and mockery of the corrupted state of the Ottoman Empire. It is no surprise that in every Karagöz play, Karagöz is unemployed and Hacivat wants to find a job for him but with the intent of garnering his share from the business.

The fact that plots of Karagöz plays are not constructed with an ethnocentric view goes very much hand in hand with the multinational and cosmopolitan structure of the Ottoman imperial system. Under the custodian umbrella of the government, it was relatively possible for the various ethnic and religious identities of the Empire to be in mutual interaction with each other by sharing a common social scene which allowed them to express their miscellaneous values and discourses. In a manner evoking most of the other imperial systems of the world history, Ottoman Empire had exceedingly diverse subjects. The governmental approach of Ottoman Empire can be deemed as a representative example of a mentality that required a manner which neither disregards nor attempts to assimilate the ethnic and religious varieties amongst these people.²⁵ As a matter of fact, just like the traditional Karagöz plays, the subjects of the empire have been represented with their entire diversities and contradictions, but at the same time in a mutual communicational act for many centuries in Ottoman Empire.

The multiculturalism on which the traditional Ottoman system is founded upon surfaces itself in Karagöz plays. The imperial government culture finds its echo in the concept of the Ottoman subjects. On the other hand, the reforms starting with the Tanzimat Period, most of which substituted the principle of the diversity immanent to the people with a superficial identity of equality can be considered as a turning point in the classical perception of the subjects. Be that as it may, the Ottoman social fabric has preserved its heterogeneous

²⁴ Sevinç Sokullu, **Türk Tiyatrosunda Komedyanın Evrimi**, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1979, p. 92

structure to a considerable degree.²⁶ This heterogeneity manifests itself in the raw in the depictions of the shadow play characters. From each and every facet of the society, either from the periphery or from the centre, various people, all of whom are extremely different from each other appear—elite and the rabble, literate and illiterate, rich and poor, children and elderly, the Armenian and the Kurd, imam and police, Beberuhi and Tuzsuz Deli Bekir, and so forth—on the shadow-show screen and exchange in a tribune libre, so to speak. Yet, the gradual collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century starting in the Balkans, which affected the social fabric in a negative way, resulted in an apparent change in the characters of Karagöz plays.²⁷

The characterisations of the shadow play personae becomes quite remarkable in the sense that they give further clues regarding the condition of the Ottoman society in the final stages of the Empire. Because the Ottoman Empire was made up of various ethnic groups, its society was rather complex. In Karagöz plays, the situation of Istanbul, the then-capital of the Ottoman Empire, is portrayed as a contemporary one. Istanbul witnessed an emigration boom in the nineteenth century in a manner not unlike the situation of Istanbul in the second half of the twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, most of the people from the rural areas of the Ottoman Empire came to Istanbul either to find new work or to practice their special trades.²⁸ In this context, Sabri Esat Siyavuşgil's argument that regards Karagöz as a form of artwork which is "*expressive of Istanbul*",²⁹ becomes quite noteworthy. Although the primary figures of the shadow play—Karagöz and Hacivat—are of central, they are accompanied by wide range of stock characters that are representative of the diversity of Ottoman society: children, servants, midwives, young girls, old women, dancing women, witches, wanton professionals,

²⁵ Salih Özbaran, **Osmanlı'yı Özlemek ya da Tarih Tasarlamak**, Ankara: İmge, 2007, p. 126

²⁶ Cf. Salâhi R. Sonyel, "Tanzimat and its Effects on the Non-Muslim Subjects of the Ottoman Empire", in **Tanzimat'ın 150. Yıldönümü Uluslararası Sempozyumu**, Ankara: 31 Ekim-3 Kasım 1989, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994, pp.353-38

²⁷ With the advent of the Republic, this picture under observation has been through a much more apparent change.

²⁸ Yavuz Pekman, **Çağdaş Tiyatromuzda Geleneksellik**, İstanbul: MİTOS Boyut, 2002, p. 71

²⁹ Sabri Esat Siyavuşgil, "İstanbul'da Karagöz ve Karagöz'de İstanbul", in **Karagöz Kitabı**, Sevengül Sönmez (ed.), İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2005, p. 115

administrators, colonials, foreigners, as well as dwarfs and opium addicts all of whom are rife with the potential for comic value.³⁰

The conditions of the individual in Ottoman society are heard even in Karagöz and Hacivat's ways of speaking. Whereas Hacivat is capable of speaking on arts, botany, and different encyclopaedic terms, Karagöz speaks the language of the common people. Thus, the spectator of the shadow play is confronted with two opposing figures: on the one hand, there is the artificial knowledge of Hacivat which makes him a quasi-member of the aristocratic class of the society, and on the other, there is Karagöz who is simply concerned with how he can make a living for himself and his family. There was indeed a huge gap between aristocracy and the common people in the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries³¹ (as there is in every society), and by means of the shadow play, it became possible for the Ottoman society individual to see his or her place in that structure played upon and reflected back to them on the shadow-show screen.

The *dramatis personae* of Karagöz hold forth no real hope for the corrupted social order of the Ottoman Empire. To a certain extent, the fact that Karagöz plays were deeply structured in the neighbourhoods of Istanbul fortifies this argument. According to İlber Ortaylı, “neighbourhoods of the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not constituted in accordance with any type of social differentiation, and as a matter of fact, Karagöz screen was a representative of a traditional neighbourhood”.³² Imam was the apparent authority of the neighbourhood of the Ottoman society. However, in Karagöz plays one can hardly speak of an official authority since power is represented to the spectator through the stock character, Tuzsuz Deli Bekir, who imposes “justice” on the people merely by means of violence. From this perspective, one can see how the neighbourhood of the Karagöz plays takes the form of a “no man’s land” in which it becomes impossible to speak of law.

³⁰ Cf. Sevinç Sokullu, **Türk Tiyatrosunda Komedyanın Evrimi**, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1979, pp. 97-98. For an account of the stock characters in Karagöz plays, see also Metin And, **Karagöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre**, Istanbul: Dost, 1979, pp. 67-75

³¹ For an extensive account on the situation of Ottoman society in these periods in question, see İlber Ortaylı, **İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı**, Istanbul: İletişim, 2001, ch.7

³² İlber Ortaylı, **Osmanlı Toplumunda Aile**. Istanbul: Pan, 2007, pp. 18-19. See also Yavuz Pekman, “Türk Tiyatrosunda Bir Başrol Olarak ‘Mahalle’”, in **İstanbul Üniversitesi Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi** 10, Istanbul: Istanbul University Press, 2007, pp. 20-49

This hopeless picture that Karagöz plays offer for its spectators manifests itself even in the depictions of children. For instance, in the play *The Big Wedding*, “on her wedding night, Karagöz’s bride bears a child who is saucy, impertinent and swears obscenely and blasphemously from the moment he is born”³³ to everyone he encounters. In contradistinction to other fields of art, which often have a tendency to depict children as symbols of innocence, purity, as well as happiness, in Karagöz plays children are depicted in a repulsive manner that presents them as “anti-heroes” in the eyes of the spectator.

The social order is indeed a forlorn one. According to Yavuz Pekman, “in such a social order immorality, degeneration, corruption, illiteracy, and arrogance are the facts of the society; by coming into the world in this kind of social order, every individual also becomes an inseparable member of that social order”.³⁴ This specific picture³⁵ taken from the realm of Karagöz indicates the most extreme point at which social criticism could have been made through Traditional Turkish Theatre forms.

Nonetheless, it was rather hard for Karagöz plays to endure this essential feature under the strict regime of the Ottoman Empire. Although Karagöz plays reverberate the social problems of the Ottoman Empire, they are not inspirational or revolutionary: they do not propose a solution for the corrupted state of the Empire and they do not direct the spectator to take a stance against the social order of the Ottoman Empire in a Brechtian sense. What Karagöz plays offer is a recognisable depiction of the collapsed social structure of the Ottoman Empire in the extreme, and thereby an Aristotelian catharsis for the spectators.

Even the ruling class was not spared from the satirical mockeries of Karagöz plays. According to And, this was to prove its breaking point:

³³ Metin And, *Karagöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre*, Istanbul: Dost, 1979, p. 80. See also Sevinç Sokullu, *Türk Tiyatrosunda Komedyanın Evrimi*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1979, pp. 108-116 and Yavuz Pekman, *Çağdaş Tiyatromuzda Geleneksellik*, Istanbul: Mitoş Boyut, 2002, pp. 75-76

³⁴ Yavuz Pekman, *Çağdaş Tiyatromuzda Geleneksellik*, Istanbul: Mitoş Boyut, 2002, p. 76

³⁵ In fact, *The Big Wedding* is not the only instance in which obscenity becomes an instrument of social criticism. Karagöz plays are replete with examples that aim at depicting the corrupted social structure of the Ottoman Empire through obscenity. Cf. Metin And, *Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu*, Istanbul: İnkilâp Kitabevi, 1985, pp. 300-302; Sevinç Sokullu, *Türk Tiyatrosunda Komedyanın Evrimi*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1979, p. 108 and Yavuz Pekman, *Çağdaş Tiyatromuzda Geleneksellik*, Istanbul: Mitoş Boyut, 2002, pp. 80-85, esp. 84-85

In another performance, Topal Hüsrev Paşa and his homosexual preferences which provided a target for Karagöz. However, when Karagöz, during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz brought an important pasha, Kıbrıslı Mehmet Paşa, to the screen, showing how his family was corrupted and stole money from the state, that proved too much for the official censor. As a result political satire was banned strictly and forever.³⁶

From that time on, Karagöz plays lost the caustic aspect inherent to genre and fell into a childish vacuity. The repercussions of this policy regarding Karagöz plays can be felt in the contemporary understanding of Karagöz in Turkish society which associates a childish and infantile aspect to that most pungent form of Traditional Turkish Theatre.

As the analysis of the essential features of Karagöz plays has indicated, the shadow play was actually among the sparsest ways of criticising the collapsed social system of the Ottoman Empire until the 1870s. Moreover, thanks to the essential feature of Karagöz, which allows each persona of the Ottoman society to “speak” during the course of the performances, one can consider Karagöz as a representative example of the translation act that takes a social representational form. Karagöz, when taken into consideration as a form of social representation, allows one to speculate upon and interpret the Ottoman individuals’ condition in the society. Furthermore, “*since social representations are both an **image** of a phenomenon and a creative expression of human subjectivity they exhibit a peculiar dialectical character*”,³⁷ in which it becomes possible for one to observe the act of translation inherent in a given social representation. Due to the dynamic structure of Karagöz performances, the oppressed Ottoman society individual had the unique chance to speak—both as individuals and as a collective entity—in the shadow-show screen. Sabri Esat Siyavuşgil’s words echo this argument: “*Karagöz, for a period of almost five centuries, has become the most sincere **translator** of the members of its society*”.³⁸ Karagöz was indeed the sole translator of the members of the Ottoman society under the strict regime of the Empire during the turbulent years of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus, the question of conveying the essence of Karagöz plays to the individuals of the Turkish Republic suggests itself as a primary issue

³⁶ Metin And, **Karagöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre**, Istanbul: Dost, 1979, pp. 84-85

³⁷ Ioannis Tsoukalas, “A Method for Surveying Social Representations”, in **Quality & Quantity** vol. 40 no. 6, 2006, p. 961, emphasis in the original.

to be discussed. Karagöz adaptations of İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıođlu and Aziz Nesin, within this context, can become quite valuable for tracing the possible changes and mutations of the essential features of Karagöz plays over the course of their history.

Karagöz in Ankara

The introduction of the Western theatre in the Tanzimat Period, along with its development in the nineteenth century, had devastating effects on the Traditional Turkish Theatre forms. With the advent of radio and cinema in the twentieth century, the traditional theatre forms started to lose their popularity in Turkish society. Still, in the nineteenth century, some attempts were made by the shadow play performers to restore the essential features of Karagöz plays. Karagöz performers of the nineteenth century “*introduced a few innovations in the shadow technique, to make Karagöz performances more relevant; they expanded its content to include contemporary references, they borrowed new scenarios and added new characters*”.³⁹ Yet, these efforts were not strong enough to compete with the newly established Western theatre form in the Ottoman Empire. In the beginning of the twentieth century, however, attempts at revitalising Karagöz plays took a radical turn through the composition of musical comedies in which actors dressed in Karagöz figures were brought to the theatre stage to perform with speech and posture. Ironically, traditional theatre forms were trying to compete against the Western theatre forms by using the means of the “West”. In other words, the advocates of that new approach in the twentieth century were modernising Karagöz by subverting the essence of its technique, which had been to cast a shadow upon white translucent material with the use of an oil lamp or candles which created a flickering, more life-like appearance for the characters.

One should take into consideration İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıođlu’s theoretical works on theatre and his dramatic pieces within this context. Baltacıođlu was in favour of an approach in which Western theatre forms could be synthesised with the traditional theatre forms of Turkey.

³⁸ Sabri Esat Siyavuşgil, “İstanbul’da Karagöz ve Karagöz’de İstanbul”, in **Karagöz Kitabı**, Sevgül Sönmez (ed.), İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2005, p. 115, emphasis added.

³⁹ Metin And, **Karagöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre**, İstanbul: Dost, 1979, p. 93

A sense of Baltacıoğlu's vast theoretical knowledge of theatre is evident from a perusal of his theoretical writings, which provide keen critical analyses of the theories of Vsevolod Meyerhold, Adolphe Appia, Edward Gordon Craig, and George Pitoëff, all of whom are among the most influential theatre theoreticians of the twentieth century.⁴⁰ In opposition to the critics of his time in Turkey, Baltacıoğlu developed a critical approach to theories of Western theatre that is firmly rooted in the Traditional Turkish Theatre forms. Baltacıoğlu's theory of "essential theatre" devotes a sub-category for Karagöz, which the author deems as "*the chef d'oeuvre of the art of theatre*".⁴¹ Karagöz's main features, such as the usage of minimal setting, the importance of Karagöz performers in a given performance, the way it reflects the condition of the society, and the progression of the plays on improvisation during the performances are, in fact, the fundamental points of Baltacıoğlu's theory of "essential theatre".⁴² Prior to the formulation of his theory, however, Baltacıoğlu engaged with the practical field of theatre, which allowed him the unique chance to test the validity of his theoretical findings in the domain of theatre. Therefore, *Karagöz in Ankara* can be regarded as one of the most important works of Baltacıoğlu for the development of his theory of "essential theatre".

Baltacıoğlu wrote *Karagöz in Ankara* in a period that seriously questioned the meaning of the existence of Karagöz in modern Turkish society. For instance, Nurullah Ataç, one of the leading critics of Turkey in the period under question, announced the "*death of Karagöz in the age of cinema and theatre*".⁴³ A brief glance at *Karagöz in Ankara* demonstrates how Ataç's comments on Karagöz at the age of cinema have turn into a stimulating factor for Baltacıoğlu. Baltacıoğlu's new characters are all selected from the contemporary world: while Şarlo (Charlot), Mikimavs (Mickey Mouse), Tarzan and Greta Garbo are the representatives of Hollywood, hence the "Western" world in the play, the prominent critic Nurullah Ataç, and the then-head of the Turkish Social Service and Children

⁴⁰ İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, **Tiyatro Nedir**, Atila Alpöge, Turhan Yılmaz Ögüt and Ali Baltacıoğlu, (eds.), İstanbul: Mitos Boyut, 2006, pp. 72-76

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 65

⁴² Cf. Ibid., pp. 60-71

⁴³ Nurullah Ataç, "Karagöz Hakkında", in **Karagöz Kitabı**, Sevengül Sönmez (ed.), İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2005, p. 226

Protection Institution Münür Hayrı⁴⁴ become the agents who symbolise Turkish society. The play is set in Ankara – an important change, and a deliberate choice on the part of Baltacıoğlu. In his writings regarding Karagöz, the author himself has written many times, “*it is both the duty and the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to deal with the problem of restoring Karagöz in Turkey*”.⁴⁵ Be that as it may, there was no serious attempt to restore the situation of Karagöz in Turkey. Hence, Baltacıoğlu set his play in Ankara to draw the attention the administrators of Turkey to the issue of Karagöz.

In *Karagöz in Ankara*, Baltacıoğlu presents the play in prologue, colloquy, the main plot, and the brief epilogue, preserving the traditional structure of Karagöz plays. The episode of the play is quite telling: Karagöz comes to Ankara from Istanbul on foot in order to sell his mere trade, that is, to amuse people. Hacivat, on the other hand, works as a doorman in the “*Degenerated Film Company*”.⁴⁶ In accordance with the traditional Karagöz plays, Hacivat works for the sake of the *status quo* and he is quite pleased with his situation. He sincerely offers a job to Karagöz in a film to be produced by the company. All Karagöz has to do is to compete with the “stars” of the cinema age in order to play the leading role of the film. Yet, neither negotiation nor communication is possible for him in the cinema age with the “world stars”. Even though by way of his agility Karagöz manages to beat Charlot, Tarzan and Greta Garbo, he fails to compete with Mikimavs. Eventually, Karagöz spoils everything and becomes unemployed once again. In the play, Karagöz slaps even the prominent critic of the period Nurullah Ataç because Ataç is depicted as an intellectual with a “Paul Valéry” smile,⁴⁷ who cries like “André Gide”⁴⁸ and moreover, likes to get a slap in his face.⁴⁹ The only good action that Ataç takes in the play is to lead Karagöz to Münür Hayrı. The happy ending is achieved when the head of the Turkish Social Service and Children Protection Institution Münür Hayrı promises to organise a Karagöz performance to take place in the Ulus Cinema Hall in Ankara. Karagöz’s words prior to the concluding part of the play become quite

⁴⁴ For the illustrations of the new characters drawn by the author, see İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, **Karagöz Ankara’da**, İstanbul: Sebat Basımevi, 1940, p. 9, 17, 25, 33, 41, 49, 53

⁴⁵ İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, **Karagöz Tekniği ve Estetiği**, İstanbul: Kültür Matbaası, 1942, p. 20

⁴⁶ İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, **Karagöz Ankara’da**, İstanbul: Sebat Basımevi, 1940, p. 14

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 50

interesting. By shouting, “*Long Live the Republic... Long Live the Republic...*”,⁵⁰ Karagöz expresses his gratitude to the newly established regime and the play concludes.

The characterisation of the play characters is indicative of the ideological aspect of Baltacıoğlu’s adaptation: on the one hand, there are “Western” characters, and on the other, there are two important figures of Turkish society. In the first place, such a characterisation places Turkey against the “West” and allows the reader to experience the societal dilemma of Turkish society in the shadow-show screen in the 1940s. This type of characterisation, moreover, is reminiscent of the depictions of Karagöz in the beginning of the twentieth century. As Halide Edib recounts,

*From the very beginning of the play one sees Karakeuz surrounded with endless difficulties. Every other personified race, Albanian, Arab, even the Jew, bully him, assault him, attack him, use him for their own purposes and if necessary occasionally flatter him to make him serve their purposes all the more. Anyone watching the play says, “That fellow cannot survive,” but when the last act comes everybody else is defeated and thwarted while Karakeuz stands and grins after escaping from every possible difficult situation.*⁵¹

Baltacıoğlu, being aware of the phases that Karagöz plays have been through, gives a dual function to Karagöz in his adaptation. The aggressive attitude Karagöz develops in *Karagöz in Ankara* contrary to the “Western” figures demonstrates the will of the Turkish society individual to pose a challenge against the “Western” culture. However, this is the tip of the iceberg in Baltacıoğlu’s adaptation. Even though the concluding part of *Karagöz in Ankara* pays honour to the newly established regime of Turkey, the consequences that the new regime brought to Turkish society are severely criticised throughout the play. The aggressive attitude of Karagöz in the play symbolises the hatred of the society against the intellectuals of Turkey who do not intend to preserve the traditional values of modern Turkey. As Meltem Ahıska puts it, “*Baltacıoğlu adds Ataç to the list of the figures that will be belittled in the play regardless of the fact that Ataç himself has no relationship with cinema at all*”.⁵² This part of

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 52

⁵¹ Halide Edib, **Turkey Faces West**, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930, p. 116

⁵² Meltem Ahıska, “Hayal Edilemeyen Toplum: Türkiye’de ‘Çevresiz Merkez’ ve Garbiyatçılık”, in **Toplum ve Bilim**, 105, p. 12

Baltacıoğlu's adaptation is indeed the most crucial aspect of the play: while the previous figures appeared on the shadow-show screen were images pertaining to the "exterior" world, Ataç is a character from "within" and depicted in a repulsive manner, as an intellectual who is hesitant, or even opposed, to preserving the traditional values of modern Turkish art against the "Western" cultural values.⁵³

From the perspective of the notion of social representation *Karagöz in Ankara* is an exemplary case. The very first impression that *Karagöz in Ankara* leaves on the reader that it is a play which places Turkey against the "West", but a close reading of the play suggests the ways in which the social problems of Turkish society individuals in the 1940s is depicted through Baltacıoğlu's adaptation. In spite of the fact that Karagöz is shown as the defender of the Turkish cultural values in the play, even Karagöz is baffled when Greta Garbo tries to lure him in and "by the skin of his teeth he manages to save himself from Garbo".⁵⁴ Karagöz here represents the individual of Turkish society individual who is thrown between Turkish cultural values and "Western" culture. Furthermore, Baltacıoğlu's characterization in the play pinpoints how deeply the presence of the "Western" figures is felt in 1940s Turkish society. In the traditional understanding of Karagöz, the characters were representatives of Ottoman society who appeared on the shadow-show screen, one can hardly find this essential feature in Baltacıoğlu's adaptation. What the reader gets instead is a monolithic Karagöz that represents the society as a whole, standing up for and speaking for Turkish cultural values.

In *Karagöz in Ankara*, Baltacıoğlu adapts Karagöz to revive its popularity in contemporary Turkish society. The play is constructed in line with the author's arguments, all of which put momentous emphasis on preserving the traditional structure of Karagöz plays, as well as the technique and the aesthetics of the shadow performance.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, in the play itself, Baltacıoğlu seems to hope to benefit from the dominant political view of the country which "adopted a Western vocation in both sciences and culture".⁵⁶ Yet, as indicated

⁵³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 13 with İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, **Karagöz Ankara'da**, İstanbul: Sebât Basımevi, 1940, pp. 45-50

⁵⁴ Meltem Ahıska, "Hayal Edilemeyen Toplum: Türkiye'de 'Çevresiz Merkez' ve Garbiyatçılık", in **Toplum ve Bilim**, 105, p. 12

⁵⁵ Cf. İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, **Karagöz Tekniği ve Estetiği**, İstanbul: Kültür Matbaası, 1942, pp. 9-20

⁵⁶ Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar, "The Translation Bureau Revisited: Translation as Symbol", in **Apropos of Ideology**, Maria Calzada-Pérez (ed.), Manchester: St. Jerome, 2003, p. 119

previously, in Baltacıoğlu's adaptation one can still find the implications of criticisms with respect to the vices, such as idolisation of the Western world, negligence of the Turkish intelligentsia towards the cultural values of Turkey in the 1940s. Nonetheless, the approach that Baltacıoğlu develops in the play becomes a contradictory one since it seeks for a benefit from the ideology that he harshly criticises in *Karagöz in Ankara*.⁵⁷ In terms of modernising *Karagöz*, on the other hand, Baltacıoğlu's play can be regarded as one of the most significant attempts of his era owing to the debates it has launched in the literary circles of the country.

Three Karagöz Plays

The debates that *Karagöz in Ankara* has launched amongst the intellectuals of Turkey, has resulted in an increased interest towards the traditional theatre forms. One concrete example of *Karagöz* adaptations in the late 1960s belongs to the internationally known playwright and humorist Aziz Nesin. As stated earlier in this study, Nesin won the *Karagöz* competition of the leading Turkish newspaper *Milliyet* with his three *Karagöz* adaptations. As a consequence of the interest growing towards *Karagöz* plays within the Turkish theatrical circle, "two of his scenarios were staged by an Istanbul theatre, in which the actors were attired in *Karagöz* character costumes".⁵⁸ Be that as it may, when the very nature of *Karagöz* which demands a performance based on the skills of the shadow play performer is taken into account, Nesin's approach becomes somewhat controversial.

⁵⁷ There is an obvious contradiction in Baltacıoğlu's sensitivity regarding the traditional roots of the culture and the Republican regime's radical tendency of modernisation. A brief glance at Baltacıoğlu's views in the earlier stages of the Republican regime fortifies the credibility of this argument to a certain extent: while Baltacıoğlu was in favour of an argument which underscores the Turkish society's need of the creative, learned, literate, as well as intellectual members within the country in the journal that he published *Yeni Adam* (New Man) in 1933, in *Karagöz in Ankara* (1940), he cannot totally abandon the values of the traditional Turkish culture. Cf. Ufuk Özcan, "Türkiye'de Sosyoloji: Başlıca Akımlar, Dönemler ve Figürler", in **Türk Sosyologları ve Eserleri-II, Genel Eğilimler ve Kurumsallaşma**, Ertan Eğribel, Ufuk Özcan (eds.), *Sosyoloji Yıllığı 20*, İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2010, pp. 121-122. At this juncture, it is also worth pointing out that Baltacıoğlu used theatre as an instrument of educating the young people of the newly established Regime through his theory of "essential theatre" by laying particular emphasis on the significance of the theatre performances in schools. Cf. Sevda Şener, **Gelişim Sürecinde Türk Tiyatrosu**, İstanbul: Alkım, 2003, p. 101

⁵⁸ Metin And, **Karagöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre**, İstanbul: Dost, 1979, p. 94

Three Karagöz Plays is comprised of adaptations entitled *The Captaincy of Karagöz*, *The Hairdressing of Karagöz* and *The Coaching of Karagöz* respectively. As the titles of Nesin's adaptations indicate, in each piece, Karagöz is unemployed and (once again) he is in the position of making his living. As Ayşegül Yüksel observes, "in these plays all of which are composed faithfully according to the traditional structure of Karagöz plays, Aziz Nesin provides a panorama ranging from daily political satire to pure humour".⁵⁹ The picture that Nesin provides in his *Three Karagöz Plays* is indicative of the fact that the unemployment problem is one of the everlasting issues that Turkish society had to live with throughout the centuries. Additionally, *Three Karagöz Plays* offers an accurate account of Turkish society in the 1960s owing to the fact that in each piece, the reader can experience the repercussions of the economical, cultural, social, as well as the political changes that Turkey has been through after the 1950s.⁶⁰

The new characters that Nesin introduces in his *Three Karagöz Plays* offer invaluable insights to the understanding of the notion of social representations of Turkish society. In addition to the basic figures of Turkish shadow theatre, namely, Karagöz and Hacivat, the author presents new characters all of whom possess distinctive features which allow one to observe the societal representations of Turkish individuals reflected in the plays: the wonder boy in *The Captaincy of Karagöz*, the stripteaser and the comprador in *The Hairdressing of Karagöz*, the modernised *Zenne*, Moral Ayten, that is, the female figure of Karagöz plays – all are rife with comic values that are constantly being translated into the social facts of Turkish society, and give clues with respect to the condition of the individuals as a collective entity.⁶¹ This act of translation in *Three Karagöz Plays* comes into existence as a consequence of the dynamic structure inherent in this Traditional Turkish Theatre form that allows each member of its society to "speak" during the course of the shadow-show performance. In this particular respect, one can see how Nesin's adaptation acquires a polyphonic feature in which it becomes possible for the members of Turkish society to speak.

⁵⁹ Ayşegül Yüksel, **Çağdaş Türk Tiyatrosundan On Yazar**, İstanbul: Mitos Boyut, 1997, p. 31

⁶⁰ Cf. Selma Baş, "Karagöz'ün Modernleştirilmesi Çabalarına Bir Örnek: Aziz Nesin'in *Üç Karagöz Oyunu*", in **Somut Olmayan Kültürel Miras: Yaşayan Karagöz, Uluslararası Sempozyum Bildirileri**, Öcal Oğuz and Yeliz Özay (eds.) Ankara: Gazi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006, p. 106

Political satire is easily found in *The Captaincy of Karagöz*, at first only thinly concealed within the puns of Karagöz and Hacivat in the introduction. Still, Nesin's intention of criticising the political system of Turkey is crystal clear right from the beginning. Karagöz's words "Don't you ever understand? The gentleman is sleeping; I'm telling you ... Not even three years have passed since the gentleman has fallen asleep"⁶² are a direct reference to the elections held in 10th of October in 1965 and resulting in the victory of Democrat Party under the leadership of Süleyman Demirel who "aspired to make Turkey the junior America".⁶³ After the introduction, the play quickly becomes more obvious in its political satire and the bureaucratic and administrative system of Turkey in the 1960s is severely criticised.

The plot of *The Captaincy of Karagöz* develops in line with Nesin's intention: Karagöz's job is to hire eighteen members which would eventually become the crew of a ship that would be "given as a grant in aid by the Robert foundation".⁶⁴ The name of the ship—"Democracy"—engages attention partly because it symbolises an idea that Turkish society yearns to achieve. Nonetheless, the rank of unemployment in the country is so high that eighteen thousand people apply for the position. The General Administrator tells Karagöz that his ultimate criteria to employ people for the job should be based upon bribery, the names of the "dignitaries" of the applicants, and plain old nepotism.⁶⁵ Throughout the play, Karagöz aptly follows The General Administrator's principles and rejects an experienced applicant. Consequently, at the end of the play "Democracy" is shipwrecked and *The Captaincy of Karagöz* closes on a note that mocks the administrators' way of understanding "Democracy".⁶⁶ Nesin, using the ship metaphor in *The Captaincy of Karagöz*, actually depicts the collapsed political system of Turkey in the 1960s.

The second play of Aziz Nesin's *Three Karagöz Plays*, namely, *The Hairdressing of Karagöz* mocks the idolisation of the Western world through depictions of characters who claim to follow the latest trends in the globe. During his conversations with women Hacivat

⁶¹ Cf. Wolfgang Wagner, "Description, Explanation and Method in Social Representation Research", **Papers on Social Representations** Vol. 4 no. 2, 1995, p. 8

⁶² Aziz Nesin, **Üç Karagöz Oyunu**, İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1968, p. 9

⁶³ Burç İdem Dinçel, "The Facts of Turkish Theatre", in **Turkish Book Review** 2, p. 85

⁶⁴ Aziz Nesin, **Üç Karagöz Oyunu**, İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1968, p. 15

⁶⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18

⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33

observes one peculiar foible of the female characters, that is, the tendency to slavishly imitate the hair-styles of women in Europe and America. Hacivat, being the wily member of the social order, advises Karagöz to open a barber shop. Yet, Karagöz would not be a stereotypical Turkish barber, but an expert fashion stylist who has come to Turkey from a foreign country with the purpose of introducing the latest trends of the world to Turkish society.⁶⁷ Karagöz cooperates with the “Comprador” to find the money to open the barber shop. The name of this character is quite striking because it is associated with the members of the society who favour doing business with the foreign capital. Furthermore, the implications of the very word “comprador” go hand in hand with the political discourse of the left-wing of Turkey in the 1960s. Eventually, Karagöz becomes a fashionable hairdresser, creating nonsensical hair models for the women. The women consider these silly hair styles as the ultimate examples of the latest fashion of the foreign world. Still, when Karagöz’s wife nails Karagöz with the stripper, all hell breaks loose.

Afterwards, “Comprador” defrauds Karagöz and calls the police to put him in jail. The dialogue between Karagöz and the Policeman is a sound criticism of the attitude of the policemen towards people who raise their voices against the government. According to the Policeman, “*there cannot be an innocent citizen*”,⁶⁸ therefore Karagöz has to confess his crimes. The closing words of this scene that reads as, “*Long Live the Police Department*”⁶⁹ foreshadow the complex web of relations between the government and the armed forces of the country which would eventually surface in such events as the Susurluk scandal of the late 1990s. This striking irony at the end of the play demonstrates the situation of Turkey in the 1960s: while traditional Karagöz plays and Baltacıoğlu’s *Karagöz in Ankara* pay respect to the Ottoman regime and the Republican ideology respectively, Nesin’s *The Hairdressing of Karagöz* salutes the armed forces of the country, thus foretelling the situation of Turkey in the long run.

In the last play of *Three Karagöz Plays*, that is, *The Coaching of Karagöz*, Karagöz turns into a football coach and teaches his players tactics and strategies which aim at fooling

⁶⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

the referee or injuring the players of the rival team. In opposition to the preceding plays of *Three Karagöz Plays*, *The Coaching of Karagöz* satirises the so-called ethics of football and the football spectator in Turkish society. Yet, in the colloquy and the interlude parts of the play, Nesin does not fail to take into consideration the way that Turkish individuals' ways of understanding the politicians.⁷⁰ Even though this satirical aspect of the play has no direct relationship with the plot, Nesin uses the dynamic structure of Karagöz plays to focus attention on the corrupted state of the politicians in the 1960s.

Throughout the play, every single figure who appears on the shadow-show screen demonstrates the condition of Turkish society. To a certain extent, none of the figures who come to the stadium are there to watch football. For example, Kocakarı (Harridan) is in the stadium with her children in order to wash them with the water that firemen pour upon the spectators who would eventually end up brawling with each other. After washing her children, Kocakarı fills the buckets with her kids since there is no water in her neighbourhood.⁷¹ Müzmin Muhalif (Obstinate Opponent) is in the stadium merely to yell, to shout, and to cuss against the social order of the society.⁷² Moral Ayten is there to support the players' morale in a fashion that somehow evokes "*the celebrated cinema stars that bolster the morale of the American soldiers*".⁷³ In the proceeding parts of the play, Nesin criticises the attitude of the football players, who can barely control their sexual perversions. This specific picture with respect to the attitude of the football players tells in advance the contemporary situation of Turkish football industry in which one can hardly speak of an authentic ethics of sports.

As far as the notions of social representation and translation are concerned, *Three Karagöz Plays* suggests itself as a firm example of these vital concepts. The characterisation of Nesin's *Three Karagöz Plays* fortifies this argument. Indeed, in each piece of the trilogy, the representative characters provide much information about societal conditions in 1960s Turkey. In combination with this, *The Captaincy of Karagöz* and *The Hairdressing of Karagöz* provides concrete examples of translation act.⁷⁴ In both of the aforementioned plays, there is a

⁷⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-75

⁷¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 84

⁷² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 86

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 20, 21, 30, 54, 60, 62

translator who is apparently there to establish communication between the “exterior” world and the “interior” world. However, communication—particularly in *The Captaincy of Karagöz*—is never realised, and the act of translation becomes an instrument through which the comic effect is achieved. Still, through these concrete examples of translation in *The Captaincy of Karagöz*, the reader acquires an idea of the conflict between the “exterior” world and the “interior” world. In *The Hairdressing of Karagöz*, Hacivat becomes the translator of the expert foreign barber Karagöz. The communication is realised in the play only to depict how a “foreign language” can mesmerise people who have the tendency of idolising a “foreign culture” and communication becomes miscommunication or deceit. Nesin, by way of offering the chance to speak to each representative individual of Turkish society, provides a picture which foreshadows the path that Turkey will follow in the later decades.

In *Three Karagöz Plays*, favouritism, bribery, idolisation of the Western world all of which go hand in hand with the empty promises that politicians give in order to receive votes from the members of the society, become the recurrent themes that depict some of the most pivotal social dynamics of the 1960s.⁷⁵ In this respect, Nesin has given Karagöz the form of social representation through the pungent picture of the society that he provides for the readers. Even though *Three Karagöz Plays* is comprised of pieces that firmly preserve the traditional structure of Karagöz, Nesin’s intention of staging these adaptation with the actors dressed as Karagöz figures distorts the essence of that traditional theatre form to a considerable extent. From this perspective, it can be inferred how Nesin has chosen the path of competing with the Western theatre form by favouring an approach which is peculiar to the Western culture.

Conclusion

Karagöz adaptations of Ismayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu and Aziz Nesin were great steps taken towards re-introducing Karagöz to Turkish readers. Translation, when understood from the functional perspective offered in this study, can be regarded as a form of social representation in which it becomes possible for one to cull at least some concrete and relevant information regarding the situation of a given society. The dynamic structure, the open-form,

and the sociological aspect of traditional Karagöz plays make this Traditional Turkish Theatre form a social phenomenon. From this vantage point, one can see how adapting this social phenomenon to the changing values of a given society achieves a vital role. What is more, this process of adaptation can be considered as a way of translating a given social phenomenon into the dynamics of a changing society.

Even though today Karagöz has sunk into oblivion in contemporary Turkish society, it still suggests itself as a vast field of resources for interdisciplinary research. As this analysis of Karagöz plays of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would suggest, there is more to take into consideration when pondering upon that theatre form. Against the contemporary understanding of Karagöz which foregrounds the humorous and childish aspects of it, it can be argued that in some ways Karagöz was a sincere translator of the life of individuals in Ottoman society during the turbulent years of the Empire, and that how these kinds of forms and details throughout the Traditional Turkish Theatre form resonate with the adaptations in the 1940s and in the 1960s offers priceless information regarding the situation of Turkish society.

Baltacıoğlu's *Karagöz in Ankara* was a significant attempt of modernising Karagöz in the 1940s. Baltacıoğlu, by integrating the Hollywood characters with the traditional shadow play figures has managed to ignite the debates concerning Traditional Turkish Theatre forms in Turkey. Although Baltacıoğlu's adaptation can be read as a play which places Turkey against the "West", it also reflects the hesitant attitude of the Turkish intellectuals towards traditional values of Turkey in the 1940s. Then again, one can experience the condition of the Turkish society through Baltacıoğlu's depiction of Karagöz in the play. The author's adaptation relies upon the societal aspect of traditional Karagöz plays by depicting Karagöz in a manner evoking one of the essential features of traditional Karagöz plays, that is, Karagöz's speaking on behalf of his society.

In a similar vein, in *Three Karagöz Plays*, Nesin has drawn a picture of Turkish society in the 1960s and created a modern Karagöz. In opposition to Baltacıoğlu's adaptation, in *Three Karagöz Plays*, Nesin introduces new characters to the shadow-show screen, all of whom can be considered as the representatives of Turkish society in the 1960s. The fact that

⁷⁵ Cf. Sevinç Sokullu, *Türk Tiyatrosunda Komedyanın Evrimi*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1979, p.

Nesin's adaptations contain various implications, all of which foreshadow the subsequent situation of Turkish society can be regarded as the most striking aspect of *Three Karagöz Plays*. Nesin's adaptations, moreover, can be shown as modernised examples of traditional Karagöz plays in which political satire was used as one of the most essential feature. All in all, both of the adaptations analysed in this paper illustrate the dynamic structure of Karagöz through which it becomes possible for the shadow play performer to discuss social issues with the purpose of building a critical awareness in a given society.

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Abstract

*One of the most striking forms of Traditional Turkish Theatre, namely Karagöz has a significant place in the history of Turkish Theatre. As opposed to the contemporary understanding of Karagöz within the Turkish society that foregrounds the humorous and childish aspects of this theatre form, Karagöz was amongst the sparse ways of criticising the collapsed social system of the Ottoman Empire during the turbulent years of the nineteenth century. The ultimate reason for this current understanding of Karagöz stems from the way that it is presented to Turkish readers. Nevertheless, a brief glance at the particular periods of the history of the Turkish Republic points out a visible change of representing this theatre form to Turkish readers. In The One-party Period and during the years following that period, there was a serious attempt of modernising Karagöz by means of adaptations. Within this context, İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu's **Karagöz Ankara'da** and Aziz Nesin's **Üç Karagöz Oyunu** suggest themselves as notable examples of these adaptations owing to the hints that they might carry regarding the social dynamics of the 1940s and 1960s respectively. These adaptations, moreover, call for a re-reading from the vantage point of Translation Studies owing to the vital role that Baltacıoğlu and Nesin attribute to the socio-critical aspect peculiar to Karagöz plays in their works.*

Since any given translation comprises the elements of the society that it belongs to, one could deem Karagöz as a form of social representation thanks to the essential feature of it that offers

place for each persona of the Ottoman Society during the course of the performance(s). In this regard, the process of re-introducing Karagöz to Turkish readers by way of adaptations suggests itself as a primary issue to be discussed from the vantage point of the contemporary understanding of translation. Taking this argument as a starting point, this paper aims at re-evaluating Karagöz adaptations of İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıođlu and Aziz Nesin from the perspectives that sociology, Translation Studies, as well as Theatre Studies provide. In order to do so, this article discusses Karagöz as a form of social representation. By doing so, this paper attempts to trace the possible change(s) that the traditional understanding of Karagöz plays might have been through in the adaptations of İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıođlu and Aziz Nesin with the purpose of shedding light on how these two authors critically engaged with this theatre form in question.

Key Words: *translation, adaptation, karagöz, İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıođlu, Aziz Nesin*

Toplumsal Bir Temsil Biçimi Olarak Çeviri ve Karagöz'ün Yeniden Türkiye Okurlarına Tanıtılması Örneđi: İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıođlu ve Aziz Nesin'in Karagöz Uyarlamaları

Öz

Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu'nun en dikkat çekici biçimlerinden Karagöz, Türk Tiyatro tarihinde önemli bir yere sahiptir. Çağdaş Türk toplumunda Karagöz'ün mizahi ve çocuksu öğelerini ön plana çıkaran anlayışın aksine, bahsi geçen tiyatro biçimi, on dokuzuncu yüzyılın çalkantılı yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun yozlaşmış toplumsal sisteminin eleştirilebildiđi nadir mecralardan biri olmuştur. Bu mevcut anlayışın yegâne sebebi, Karagöz'ün çağdaş Türk okurlarına sunulma şeklidir. Bununla birlikte, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tarihindeki belirli dönemlerine genel bir bakış, Karagöz'ün Türk okuyucularına sunulma biçiminde gözle

görülür bir deęişiklik olduęunu ortaya koymaktadır. Tek Parti Dönemi ve bu dönemi izleyen yıllar, uyarlamalar vasıtasıyla Karagöz'ü ciddi anlamda modernleştirme çabalarına tanıklık etmiştir. Bu bağlamda, İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoęlu'nun **Karagöz Ankara'da** ve Aziz Nesin'in **Üç Karagöz Oyunu** adlı eserleri, hem 1940'lı yılların, hem de 1960'lı yılların toplumsal dinamiklerine ışık tutmaları açısından söz konusu Karagöz uyarlamalarının öne çıkan örnekleri olarak deęerlendirilebilir. Ayrıca, bu uyarlamalarda, Karagöz oyunlarına içkin toplumsal eleştiri özelliğinin kazanabileceęi hayati rolün, Baltacıoęlu ve Nesin tarafından nasıl uygulamaya geçirildięi sorusu, yazarların eserlerinin Çeviribilim açısından incelenmesine imkân vermektedir.

Her çeviri eyleminin, ait olduęu toplumun unsurlarını içinde barındırdıęı gerçeęi göz önüne bulundurulduğunda, Karagöz oyunları, gösterim(ler) sırasında Osmanlı toplumunun her üyesine yer veren özellięi sayesinde birer toplumsal temsil biçimi olarak nitelendirilebilmektedir. Bu bağlamda, Karagöz'ün Türk okurlarına uyarlamalar yoluyla yeniden tanıtılması süreci, çağdaş çeviri anlayışı açısından tartışılması gereken önemli konulardan biridir. Bu argümanı çıkış noktası alan makale, Baltacıoęlu ve Nesin'in Karagöz uyarlamalarını, sosyoloji, Çeviribilim ve Tiyatro Araştırmaları açısından bir okumasını sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu hedef doğrultusunda çalışma, Karagöz'ü bir toplumsal temsil biçimi olarak tartışmaya açmaktadır. Makale, Baltacıoęlu ve Nesin'in eserlerinde geleneksel Karagöz anlayışının geçirdięi olası deęişim(ler)i izleyerek, her iki yazarın söz konusu tiyatro biçimiyle nasıl hesaplaştıęına dair bir fikir vermeyi hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: çeviri, uyarlama, Karagöz, İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoęlu, Aziz Nesin

