

## Political Discourse and Ideology in the English and Turkish Othellos

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to explore how the ideologies, political discourses, and “dissident stories” in *Othello*, including the discourse on the Turks, have been dealt with in three Turkish translations. Evidently, most of the conflicts in Shakespeare’s plays are confrontations between ideologies. For instance, the medieval world of feudalism versus the modern realm of bourgeoisie, patriarchy versus feminist ideology, the Ottoman Empire versus Europe, republicanism versus monarchy, racism and othering versus multiculturalism and hybridity, and Protestantism versus Catholicism are some of the rivaling ideologies in *Othello*. The three Turkish translations of *Othello* I examine in my paper are by Orhan Burian (1943), Ülkü Tamer (1964), and Özdemir Nutku (1985).

**Keywords:** Turkish translations of *Othello*, ideologies, discourse on the Turks, dissident stories.

### İngilizce ve Türkçe *Othello*’larda Siyasi Söylem ve İdeoloji

**Öz:** Bu makale, Türkler hakkındaki söylemler dâhil olmak üzere, *Othello*’daki ideolojilerin, siyasi söylemlerin ve “muhalif hikâyeler”in üç Türkçe çeviride nasıl tercüme edildiğini incelemektedir. Açıktır ki Shakespeare’in oyunlarındaki çatışmaların çoğu, ideolojiler arasındaki karşıtlıklardır. Örneğin, feodalizmin ortaçağ dünyası ile burjuvazinin modern dünyası arasındaki karşıtlık, erkek egemen düşünce ile feminist ideoloji arasındaki karşıtlık, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Avrupa arasındaki mücadele, cumhuriyetçilik-monarşi karşıtlığı, ırkçılık ve ötekileme ile çok kültürlülük ve melezlik arasındaki çatışma ve Protestanlık ile Katoliklik arasındaki muhalefet, *Othello*’da yer alan bazı ideolojiler arası karşıtlıklardır. Makalede incelediğim *Othello*’nun üç Türkçe çevirisinin ilki Orhan Burian tarafından 1943’te, ikincisi Ülkü Tamer tarafından 1964’te ve üçüncüsü Özdemir Nutku tarafından 1985’te yapılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Othello*’nun Türkçe çevirileri, ideolojiler, Türkler hakkındaki söylemler, muhalif hikâyeler.

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## 1. Introduction

“Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk” (2.1.114). These words are from *Othello*, “the most exciting and greatest tragedy of Shakespeare” (McEvoy 2000: 1). They are the defensive words of Iago in response to Desdemona’s accusation “O, fie upon thee, slanderer!” (2.1.113) Desdemona swears at Iago because he insolently declares some stereotypical and humiliating views about women. The implied conflict between a dominant patriarchal discourse and a marginal—but subversive—feminist sensitivity in the play is an issue that deserves attention, and I will elaborate on it later. First, let us look at the responsive statement made by Iago: “Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk.” What does this statement tell us? Why should Iago be a Turk if he is lying?

This sentence seems to be part of a general and widely circulated discourse about the Turks in Shakespeare’s times. The prevalent and permeating discourse about the Turks in *Othello* is a reflection of this fact. That the ghost of the Turks is perpetually there in the backdrop of *Othello* indicates how much the imagination of Shakespeare and his contemporaries must have been preoccupied with the Turks. As I elaborate below, the historical and socio-cultural context of the late 16th and early 17th centuries, i.e., the context in which *Othello* was written, has a significant impact on the play.

If we accept the idea that “All language use is ... ideological” (Calzada-Pérez 2003: 2), we may see that *Othello*, as a text, reveals many things about the ideas, ideologies and values of its times. By the same token, because “Translation is an operation carried out on language use”, it “itself is always a site of ideological encounters” (Calzada-Pérez 2003: 2). Accordingly, this paper aims to explore how the ideologies and political discourses in *Othello*, including those about the Turks, have been dealt with in three Turkish translations.

If we take ideology in the sense that it is “a set of stories through which [one] interprets the world” (McEvoy 2000: 193), then there are several “sets of stories” in *Othello* that are in an incessant competition with each other. Indeed most of the conflicts in Shakespeare’s plays seem to be confrontations between ideologies. For instance, the medieval world of feudalism versus the modern realm of bourgeoisie, patriarchy versus feminist ideology, the Ottoman Empire versus Europe, republicanism versus monarchy, racism and othering versus multiculturalism and hybridity, Protestantism versus Catholicism, and Machiavellism versus moral principles are some of the rivaling ideologies in *Othello*.

That Shakespeare has a profound political consciousness is an undeniable fact, but does he explicitly favor any specific political system or ideology? According to Terry Eagleton, “Even those who know very little about Shakespeare might be vaguely aware that his plays value social order and stability...” (1987: 1). This view is, of course, irrefutable because most of Shakespeare’s plays, including *Othello*, end with the restoration of order and stability. Moreover, as Andrew Hadfield points out, “a more careful analysis of the political options open to Shakespeare, and his use of them in his plays and poetry, will

reveal a highly politicized and radical thinker, interested in republicanism” (Hadfield 2003: 465).

His interest in republicanism is an issue worth attention, but for the moment, let us just remark that in several of his plays, including *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*, the setting is Venice, a modern republic with a constitution, a senate and a centralized government. This ostensibly has positive implications in favor of republicanism. However, it is not always possible to categorize Shakespeare as someone who exclusively supports a certain political system or ideology because “[his] treatment of politics is exploratory rather than prescriptive” (Leggatt 1989: 239). He seems to have an ambivalent attitude toward political issues and ideologies, and this ambivalence is subversive. According to the cultural materialists, the British school of Shakespeare critics, Shakespeare’s plays have “dissident stories that undermine...that story which supports the powerful and is most widely believed (i.e. is dominant)” (McEvoy 2000: 205). Accordingly, in addition to exploring how the ideologies and political discourses in *Othello* have been translated into Turkish, I want to examine how subversive “dissident stories” have been dealt with in the Turkish translations.

The three Turkish translations of *Othello* I examine in my paper are by Orhan Burian, Ülkü Tamer and Özdemir Nutku. Orhan Burian’s translation was commissioned by the state-supported Translation Bureau of the 1940s and published by the Turkish Ministry of Education in 1943. Ülkü Tamer’s translation was published by Varlık Yayınları in 1964, and Özdemir Nutku’s translation was published by Remzi Kitabevi in 1985.

Two significant concepts of translation studies I use in my analysis are “foreignizing translation” and “domesticating translation” (Venuti 1995), which correspond to the German Romantic Friedrich Schleiermacher’s notions of “taking the reader to the author” and “bringing the author to the reader” respectively (Robinson 1997: 1, 116-117). Thus, in foreignizing translation, the translator is more interested in translating a text with the “flavour of the original,” keeping the original author’s style and ideas as closely as possible in it whereas in domesticating translation s/he is more concerned with rendering a text in such a way as to meet the needs and expectations of the target audience.

## 2. The Historical and Socio-cultural Context of *Othello*

It is a well-established fact that one of the sources Shakespeare utilized in writing *Othello* was a short story in Giraldi Cinthio’s *Hecatommithi*, a collection of stories published in 1565. According to E.A.J. Honigmann, there was another source that may have inspired Shakespeare:

We now know that he did not have to rely on literary sources: not long before he began *Othello* he had the opportunity of observing a Moorish embassy at first hand. The ambassador of the King of Barbary arrived in England in August 1600, for ‘half year’s abode in London’ ...;

being Muslims and strange in their ways, he and his retinue caused a stir. Shakespeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, performed at court in the Christmas season (1600-1), before the ambassador's departure, and they attracted other foreign visitors to the theatre, so we may take it that the dramatist must have encountered 'the Barbarians', as they were called, and that the first audiences of *Othello* could compare Shakespeare's Moor with these much-discussed foreigners. (Honigmann 1997: 2)

Thinking that Barbary and other North African countries were mostly allies of the Ottoman Empire in those times, it is not surprising that *Othello* contains so many references to the Ottomans or Turks. I guess the Ottomans could dominate the Mediterranean in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the cooperation of North African countries. We know that the Ottomans took Cyprus from the Venetians in 1570-3 in collaboration with their North African allies and this enabled them to establish their long-term domination over the Mediterranean.

The relations between the Ottoman Empire, England and other European countries in this period must naturally have an impact on any kind of textual production, including Shakespeare's drama. It is well known that the Ottoman Empire was the most powerful empire of the world and the greatest rival of European countries at that time. North Africa, where *Othello* came from, and the Mediterranean Sea were significant domains of competition where even "throughout the early 16th century the two largest empires of the early modern world vied for political and commercial dominance – the Habsburg Empire of Charles V and the Ottoman Empire of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent" (Brotton 1998: 33). Obviously, the Ottoman Empire and the Turks were known to all the Europeans for centuries because of their wars with European forces and their conquests in Europe and other regions of the world. Moreover, in the late 16th century:

The English crown (and a whole range of freelance merchants and privateers) established an amicable, if politically subordinate relationship with the Ottoman Porte in Istanbul, eager to exploit the commercial possibilities offered by extensive trading relations with the Ottoman-controlled regions of the eastern Mediterranean, which became known as the Levant. (Brotton 1998: 35)

I guess all these explain why Iago makes the abovementioned statement and why *Othello* includes so many allusions to the Turks.

In what kind of society did Shakespeare live? The answer of this question is of utmost importance because instead of seeing Shakespeare as "the creative genius who stands outside time", taking him as "a writer whose plays are the product of the time in which they were written" (McEvoy 2000: 268) would enable us to contextualize his

work correctly. Accordingly, the society in which Shakespeare produced his work was “a society in a state of transition” (McEvoy 2000: 64). The transition mentioned here is from “the feudal medieval world of loyalty to your lord in an unchanging society dominated by religion ...to a modern and increasingly ‘secular’ society” (McEvoy 2000: 64).

The times Shakespeare lived in were hard times for England. First of all, the period was a period of “social unrest and energetic political controversy” (Wells 1986: 1). After England won a great victory against the Spanish Armada in 1588:

...the country suffered the worst economic depression it had known since the Tudors came to power. The combined effects of inflation, of crippling taxes made necessary by the continuing war with Spain, of a series of appallingly bad harvests and of new outbreaks of plague had a devastating effect on national morale. (Wells 1986: 1-2)

An issue that constituted an essential part of the political controversy of the period was republicanism versus hereditary monarchy. As Andrew Hadfield points out:

Republicanism...was a pressing political issue in the 1580s and 1590s when Shakespeare first started writing. After the failure of Elizabeth’s last attempt at marriage in 1580, it was clear that the Tudor dynasty would end as no heir could be produced. Unless principles of hereditary monarchy were dismissed or subverted, the throne would be claimed by Mary Queen of Scots, who, being a promiscuous Scottish Catholic, ruling over a divided land, and responsible for murdering one of her husbands, was not seen as the ideal choice. Hence many Protestants pushed hard for the execution of Mary, which they eventually achieved in 1587. Her son, James VI, was an uncertain prospect and historians have argued about how he might have been regarded in England in the last sixteen years of Elizabeth’s reign. As a result, many writers became interested in alternative ways of maintaining and transferring power, paying particular attention to the Venetian and Roman republics, as well as the practice of elective monarchy. (Hadfield 2003: 465)

All these historical facts, of course, had a significant impact on Shakespeare’s works, including *Othello*. Another thing that we need to mention is the individualism that came together with the new modern and secular society. This could, of course, be associated with the humanism of the Renaissance, as well.

As the quote above points out, like the many writers of the period, Shakespeare must also have had an interest in “alternative ways of maintaining and transferring power.” I guess that’s why he has chosen a foreigner as the main character of *Othello* and portrayed him as a general and governor serving the Venetian republic. In fact, when we look at

the debates of the period, we see that the intellectuals placed a special emphasis on “the need for virtue in government officials or magistrates, often leading to the suggestion that hereditary monarchy was not the ideal form of government because one could not guarantee that the best would inherit the throne” (Hadfield 2003: 467). This emphasis on individual merit instead of hereditary privileges is most vividly extant in *Othello*, of course.

Interestingly, “Often such arguments would praise the constitution of Venice because official positions were not held for life or at the whim of a monarch but rotated every few years” (Hadfield 2003: 467). As I stated before, Shakespeare’s choosing Venice and Cyprus (an island under the hegemony of Venice) as the setting of *Othello* and Othello, a foreigner with different racial and cultural characteristics, as his hero has significant implications. All in all, it may be said that “In *Othello* Shakespeare asks us to think the unthinkable, and in passing touches on many of the stereotypical judgements that society takes for granted” (Honigmann 1997: 61).

### 3. Translation of the Ideologies and Political Discourses in *Othello*

#### 3.1. Translation of “the Turk”

Let us start with the translation of the excerpt which contains Iago’s aforementioned statement about the Turks and his patriarchal discourse that embodies calcified prejudices against women. The shifts I particularly discuss below are underlined. The source text excerpt and its three Turkish translations are as follows:

IAGO — Come on, come on. You are pictures out of doors,  
Bells in your parlors, wildcats in your kitchens,  
Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,  
Players in your housewifery, and housewives in...  
Your beds!  
DESDEMONA — O, fie upon thee, slanderer!  
IAGO — Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk:  
You rise to play, and go to bed to work. (2.1.109-115)

IAGO — Hadi hadi, siz kadınlar sokakta resim gibisinizdir, odalarınızda çingirak, mutfaklarınızda yaban kedisi, kabahatlerinizin önünde azize, kızdırılınca ifrit kesilirsiniz; ve işlerinizi savsaklar, sonra yataklarınıza girince hamarat olursunuz.

DESDEMONA — Ayıp sana iftiracı!

IAGO — Dedğim pekâlâ doğrudur, yalansa adam değilim. Yataktan oyun oynamak için kalkar, yatağa iş görmek için girersiniz. (Burian, 38-39)

IAGO — Hadi hadi canım sen de. Siz kadınlar kapıdan dışarı adımınızı attınız mı, hepiniz birer resim. Mutfakta yaban kedisi, oturma odasında da cırcır böceği kesilirsiniz. Bir kusur işleyince yüzünüze bakan sizi azize sanır. Hele bir kızın, hele bir kızın, işte o zaman sizden şeytanı yoktur. Fingirder durursunuz da yatağa girince hanım hanımcık biri olur çıkarsınız.

DESDEMONA — İftira ediyorsunuz, Iago.

IAGO — Yok yok, doğru söylüyorum, yalansa Osmanlıyım. Oyun oynamak için kalkar, çalışmak için de yatağa girersiniz. (Tamer, 22-23)

IAGO — Hadi hadi, konuşurma beni.

Siz, kadınlar, sokakta güzelsiniz yağlıboya tablo gibi,

Oturma odasında çingirak, mutfakta yaban kedisi,

Kabahatliyseniz azize, kızınca ifrit kesilirsiniz,

Ev işlerinde oynaklık eder, hamaratlığınız tutar yatakta.

DESDEMONA — Seni iftiracı, seni!

IAGO — Hiç de değil, hepsi doğru, yalansa sünnet etsinler beni.

Oyun için yaktan kalkar, çalışmak için yatağa girersiniz. (Nutku, 63)

The clause “or else I am a Turk” has been translated as “yalansa adam değilim” (literally meaning “if it is a lie, I am not a (mature hu)man”) by Burian, as “yalansa Osmanlıyım” (literally meaning “if it is a lie, I am an Ottoman”) by Tamer, and as “yalansa sünnet etsinler beni” (literally meaning “if it is a lie, let them circumcise me”) by Nutku.

Not only here, but throughout *Othello*, almost all the references to “the Turk” or “Turks” have been rendered in the three Turkish translations as “Osmanlı” (“the Ottoman”) or “Osmanlılar” (“the Ottomans”), or they have been totally omitted or modified. In this example, we have all the three types of manipulations I have just mentioned. In Burian’s rendering (i.e. “if it is a lie, I am not a (mature hu)man”), the term “a Turk” has been totally erased and instead “a (mature hu)man” has been used. In Tamer’s translation (i.e. “if it is a lie, I am an Ottoman”), it has been modified into “an Ottoman.” In Nutku’s rendering (i.e. “if it is a lie, let them circumcise me”), the same term has been omitted and, instead, by referring to the custom of circumcision in Islam and Judaism, an ambiguous and indirect allusion to the Moslems and Jews has been used.

When Bülent Bozkurt, a well-established Shakespeare translator in Turkey, discusses some of the manipulations made in the early (late 19th and early 20th centuries) and modern translations of Shakespeare’s plays, he points out:



That the derogatory references to the “Turk,” a term which appellatively meant so much as an “infidel” or “unbeliever” for the Elizabethans, would be lost in translation at that time, either by being omitted or modified should be self-evident. As a matter of fact, it is not uncommon to find such seemingly offensive references deleted or altered even in modern translations of Shakespeare’s plays. (Bozkurt 2005: 45-6)

The interesting thing is that nowhere in these three translations have the terms “a/the Turk” or “the Turks” been translated as they are in the source text. The translators have invariably preferred to replace these terms with “the Ottoman(s)”. I think this may have something to do with the ideology of disinheriting the Ottoman heritage. In other words, because the multiethnic and multicultural Ottoman polity has been replaced by the modern nation-state of the Turkish republic, the terms “the Turk” or “the Turks” can be rendered as “the Ottoman” or “the Ottomans”, but not as anything directly associated with the Turks. Of course, the Turks mentioned here are the Ottomans, but, nonetheless, since Shakespeare has used the words “Turk” or “Turks” in his play, one wonders why the translators have erased them.

I will cite two other examples concerning the discourse on Turks below, but before that, let us look at the two other shifts I have marked on the excerpts above. As mentioned before, it is evident that there is a stereotypical patriarchal discourse against women in the source text, and it seems to have been satisfactorily translated into Turkish in the three translations. However, the renderings of the expressions “Bells” and “Players in your housewifery” may have different connotations. To illustrate, the word “Bells” has been translated as “çingirak” (meaning “rattle” or “bell”) by Burian and Nutku and as “çircir böceği” (meaning “beetle”) by Tamer. The word “çingirak”, especially in modern Turkish, connotes a rattlesnake, and such a connotation seems to increase the intensity of the patriarchal discourse against women. Obviously, the word “Bells” does not connote the same thing(s) in the source excerpt. The expression “çircir böceği” may evoke a similar meaning to “Bells” in the sense that women are considered as “noisy and talkative” like “beetles”.

The phrase “Players in your housewifery” has been rendered as “işlerinizi savsaklar” (meaning “you neglect your duties”) by Burian, as “Fingirder durursunuz” (meaning “you constantly coquet”) by Tamer, and as “Ev işlerinde oynaklık eder” (meaning “you behave unreliably/playfully/flirtatiously in household jobs”) by Nutku. The semantic differences between the three renderings are evident. Apparently, Burian and Nutku’s translations are closer to each other although Nutku’s is a bit ambiguous and obscure. On the other hand, Tamer’s rendering is rather slangish and has obvious sexual connotations. By omitting “housewifery”, Tamer seems to have opted for foregrounding women’s “tendency to constantly coquet”.

Now it is time to look at the two examples regarding the discourse on Turks. Let us start with the first: \_



OTHELLO -- Why, how now, ho! From whence ariseth this?  
Are we turned Turks? and to ourselves do that  
Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?  
For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl. (2.3.165-8)

OTHELLO -- Ne oluyor? Bu iş nereden çıktı? Kendi düşmanımız kendimiz mi olduk ki Tanrının Osmanlılara yaptırmadığı şeyi biz yapıyoruz? Hristiyanlığınızdan utanın. Bu barbarca kavgayı bırakın. (Burian, 56)

OTHELLO -- Nedir bu hal? Bu da nereden çıktı? Osmanlılarla döğüşemediniz diye birbirinizi mi yiyeceksiniz? Allah korkusu yok mu sizde? Vahşiler gibi bu döğüşme de ne oluyor? (Tamer, 32)

OTHELLO -- Nedir bu rezalet? Bu da nerden çıktı?  
Kendimizin düşmanı olduk da  
Kendimize mi yapacağız Tanrı'nın Osmanlı'ya yasakladığını?  
Hristiyanlık aşkına kesin vahşiler gibi hurlaşmayı. (Nutku, 83)

The underlined part in the source excerpt has been rendered quite differently in the three target texts. Accordingly, the part “Are we turned Turks? and to ourselves do that Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?” has been translated as “Kendi düşmanımız kendimiz mi olduk ki Tanrının Osmanlılara yaptırmadığı şeyi biz yapıyoruz?” (“Have we become our own enemy and are doing to ourselves what God has forbidden the Ottomans”) by Burian, as “Osmanlılarla döğüşemediniz diye birbirinizi mi yiyeceksiniz?” (“Are you going to eat each other because you could not fight the Ottomans”) by Tamer, and as “Kendimizin düşmanı olduk da Kendimize mi yapacağız Tanrı'nın Osmanlı'ya yasakladığını?” (“Have we become our own enemy and are we going to do to ourselves what God has forbidden the Ottomans”) by Nutku.

The first thing that captures attention here is the omission of the term “Turks” in all the three excerpts. Besides, Nutku’s rendering is almost identical with Burian’s rendering except for a slight change in tense and word order. Indeed Nutku, like many other translators, seems to have read and benefitted from Burian’s translation. Of course, it is well known that translations after the first translation are usually done with a critical eye towards their precursors. Needless to say, Tamer’s translation of the same part is quite different from the source excerpt and the other two renderings.

Another thing I would like to discuss is the renderings of the phrase “For Christian shame” in the above excerpt. Burian has rendered it as “Hristiyanlığınızdan utanın” (“be

ashamed of your Christianity”), Tamer as “Allah korkusu yok mu sizde?” (“Do you not fear God?”), and Nutku as “Hristiyanlık aşkına” (“For Christianity’s sake”). The only rendering that has omitted Christianity and assimilated the source expression to the target culture is Tamer’s translation. As such textual evidence indicates, Tamer seems to have opted for a domesticating translation strategy. Or perhaps he has his own ideological reasons for making such a manipulation in the rendering of the abovementioned phrase.

On the other hand, erasing Christianity in this phrase effaces some crucially important implications regarding Othello’s identity as a foreigner, an other, trying to integrate into a new culture and religion enthusiastically. As Honigmann points out, “[Othello] adopts a militantly Christian tone as if to forestall criticism of him as an outsider, or even a pagan” (1997: 22). Moreover, “The ideological incompatibility of his dark skin and Christian faith makes Othello susceptible to a vision of himself as the tainted other” (Burton 1998: 57-58). His consciousness of being an outsider makes him more sensitive to the issue of identity, and I believe this consciousness and sensitivity deserve a special attention in translation. All in all, it is obvious that when Christianity is erased from this phrase, Othello’s enthusiasm to show himself as a devout Christian will be lost in translation.

The second example I intend to examine here in connection with the ideological discourse on Turks is as follows:

OTHELLO

And say besides, that in Aleppo once,  
Where a malignant and a turbanned Turk  
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,  
I took by the throat the circumcised dog  
And smote him – thus! *He stabs himself. (5.2.)*

OTHELLO – ...ayrıca da bildirin ki vaktiyle Halepte, bir Venedikliyi dövüp devlet aleyhinde söz söyleyen ahlâksız bir keçekülâhlıyı, boğazından yakalamış ve sünnetli köpeği böyle gebertmişim.

*Kendini hançerler. (Burian, 165)*

OTHELLO – Şunu da ekleyin sonra: bir gün Halep’de dolaşırken uğursuz bir sarıklıya raslamışım. Bir Venedikliyi dövüp devlete küfrediyordu. Yakalayıp sünnetli köpeği gırtlığından, gebertmişim, böyle.

*(Kendini vurur.) (Tamer, 92)*

OTHELLO – Şunu ekleyin sonra:

Bir gün Halep’te dolaşırken  
Rastlamışım zorbalık eden bir sarıklıya;

Bir Venedikli'yi dövüyor, devlete küfrediyordu;  
Gırtlığından yakalayıp sünnetli köpeği  
Gebertmişim – işte böyle.

(*Kendini hançerler.*) (Nutku, 216)

These are Othello's last words before he kills himself. He asks Lodovico and others to report his final remarks in their letters to the Venetian State. When we compare the marked parts in the source text passage and those in the target text passages, we may easily see that the word "Turk" has been omitted in all the three translations.

The phrase "a malignant and a turbanned Turk" has been rendered as "ahlâksız bir keçekülâhlı" ("an indecent person with a felt cap") by Burian, as "uğursuz bir sarıklı" ("a cursed person with a turban") by Tamer, and as "zorbalık eden bir sarıklı" ("a bullying person with a turban") by Nutku. We have a different meaning of the word "malignant" in each version. In Burian's version, it is "indecent"; in Tamer's version, it is "cursed"; and in Nutku's version, it is "bullying". Another thing that attracts attention is the word "turbanned". In Tamer and Nutku's versions, it has been rendered as "with a turban", but in Burian's version, it has been translated as "with a felt cap". I am not sure whether a "felt cap" and a "turban" connote the same thing. Needless to say, in all the three translations, no arbitrary shift or manipulation has been employed in the translation of the phrase "the circumcised dog."

### 3.2. Translation of the Patriarchal Discourse and its Subversion

According to Kathleen McLuskie:

...Shakespeare's plays are not primarily explorations of 'the real nature of women' or even 'the hidden feelings in the human heart'. They were the products of an entertainment industry which, as far as we know, had no women shareholders, actors, writers, or stage hands. His women characters were played by boys and, far from his plays being an expression of his idiosyncratic views, they all built on and adapted earlier stories. (McLuskie 1988: 92)

Apart from the factual data, the arguments in the quote above are tenable, but when we read *Othello* more carefully, we can see that the play contains textual and thematic elements that undermine the dominant patriarchal discourse. How these elements have been translated is the subject of this section.

The following quote is like a manifesto of a subversive feminist sensitivity:

EMILIA

Let husbands know

Their wives have sense like them; they see and smell

And have their palates both for sweet and sour

As husbands have. What is it that they do

When they change us for others? Is it sport?

I think it is. And doth affection breed it?

I think it doth. Is't frailty that thus errs?

It is so too. And have not we affections,

Desires for sport, and frailty, as men have?

Then let them use us well; else let them know,

The ills we do, their ills instruct us so. (5.1.92-102)

As it can be seen, Emilia ardently argues that women and men are human beings with similar feelings, needs, pleasures and weaknesses. The feminist discourse in this excerpt has been fully translated in all the three translations without any significant shift except for the marked clause “let them use us well”, which has been rendered as “bize iyi muamele etsinler” (“let them treat us well”) (Burian, 137), as “Bizi iyi kullansınlar” (“let them use us well”) (Tamer, 77), and as “Bize iyi davransınlar” (“let them treat us well”) (Nutku, 179).

The verb “use” in this context means “treat” or “behave toward”, but Tamer has rendered it as “use”, which is disharmonious with the context in which it is used. In other words, Tamer’s rendering is a patriarchal statement in the middle of a feminist discourse and sounds as if Emilia wanted men to “utilize” or “capitalize on” women.

In an attempt to comment on the passage above, Sean McEvoy points out that in the realm of the play, “it is the men who have the power and make the rules. But if men realized that women were the same as them and treated women as equals, not as possessions, the catastrophe which is about to occur would never arise” (2000: 209). This point of view argues that if women are not considered and treated as “equals” of men, a “catastrophe” will follow. Indeed the tragic end of the play may be taken as the “proof” of this.

On the other hand, the same tragic end can be taken as the “evidence” of not obeying patriarchy. According to this perspective, Desdemona revolts against her father by eloping with and marrying Othello. Rebellion to patriarchy brings disaster and “chaos”: “[A] generalized vision of chaos is present in gendered terms in which patriarchy, the institution of male power in the family and the State, is seen as the only form of social organization strong enough to hold chaos at bay” (McLuskie 1988: 99).

### 3.3. Translation of Othering and its Subversion

Xenophobia, racism and othering constitute a significant part of the dominant discourse in *Othello*, but the play itself, being the tragic story of a Moor, subverts the ideology of racism and othering. In the general sense of translation, *Othello* is a translated man, a hybrid person endeavoring to become part of a new culture. How racist discourses and othering have been translated into Turkish is what concerns us in this section. Since all these are embodied in the identity of *Othello*, we need to look at how his identity has been constructed both in the source text and the target texts. The first example is related to a physical feature of *Othello*:

RODERIGO

What a full fortune does the thicklips owe  
If he can carry't thus! (1.1.65-66)

*RODERIGO*. — O paldım dudaklı herif eğer Desdemonayı böylece alıp  
götürebildiyse ne zengin bir hazineye kondu! (Burian, 5)

RODERIGO — O bir dudağı yerde, bir dudağı gökte herifin talihi de ne  
talihmiş ya; kızı böyle kaçırdığına göre... (Tamer, 6)

RODERIGO

O kalın dudaklı herif kızı böyle kaçırabildiyse,  
Ne zengin bir hazineye kondu, düşünsene. (Nutku, 27)

The word “thicklips” in the source excerpt is an allusion to *Othello*’s foreignness and presumably blackness (or Mooriness). Burian, Tamer and Nutku’s translations of this term are quite interesting. Burian has translated this term as “O paldım dudaklı herif” (“That *paldım*-lipped guy”). The word “paldım” is an obsolete word from Persian meaning “a strap placed on the upper part of the back legs of a pack or saddle animal for the purpose of preventing the saddle from slipping”.<sup>1</sup>

Tamer has translated “thicklips” as “O bir dudağı yerde, bir dudağı gökte herif” (“That guy with a lip on earth and a lip in the sky”). This rendering is extremely strong and increases *Othello*’s foreignness and otherness to the extent of dehumanizing him. It is as if he is a giant from a fairy tale. Nutku has rendered the same term as “O kalın dudaklı herif” (“That thick-lipped guy”). His rendering is the closest to the source text semantically.

1) This definition of “paldım” has been taken from the online dictionary of the Turkish Language Association at <http://www.tdk.gov.tr/TR/SozBul.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFFAAAF6AA849816B2EF4376734BED947CDE&Kelime=pald%c4%b1m>.

The dehumanization and othering of Othello is a prevalent ideological issue in the play. There are implications supporting the idea that he could be depicted like an animal. For instance, Iago calls him “an old black ram” (1.1.87) and “a Barbary horse” (1.1.110). Interestingly, in the following example, two of the three translators have depicted Othello like an animal whereas in the source excerpt and in one translation no such dehumanization exists:

RODERIGO—To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor (1.1.124)

*RODERIGO*.— zevkine düşkün bir Mağriplinin kucağına gitmesi  
(Burian, 8)

RODERIGO— keyfine düşkün bir Arap’ın iri pençelerine kaçtı. (Tamer, 8)

RODERIGO— Şehvetten gözü dönmüş bir Mağripli’nin iri pençelerine sığındı. (Nutku, 31)

The word “clasps” in the phrase “gross clasps” means “embraces” (Honigmann 1997: 124), and Burian has translated it into Turkish as “kucak” (embrace), but he has omitted the word “gross”. On the other hand, Tamer and Nutku have rendered the same phrase as “iri pençeler” (“large claws”), which obviously connotes a wild animal.

The word “lascivious” is a word that was stereotypically associated with the Moors or Moslems in Shakespeare’s time. Burian and Tamer have rendered it very closely as “zevkine düşkün” (“fond of his pleasure”) and “keyfine düşkün” (“fond of his enjoyment”) whereas Nutku has rendered it as “Şehvetten gözü dönmüş” (“lost in lust”).

I did not mark it on the excerpt above, but I want to bring it up here: the rendering of the word “Moor”. As it can be seen above, Burian and Nutku have rendered it as “Mağripli” and Tamer has translated it as “Arap”. Indeed we can see how this term has been translated throughout the play by looking at the beginning of the play where the dramatis personae are given. Accordingly, in the dramatis personae of Burian’s text, Othello is described as “a Moorish noble in the service of the state of Venice”; in the character list of Tamer’s text, he is depicted as “an *arap*” (a black person); and in Nutku’s translation, he is delineated as “a Moor, a noble serving the state of Venice”.

Both terms were used in the early translations of *Othello*, but today “it is unlikely that the term “arap,” an “innocent” term in a particular context, would be used, in print or on stage, for the Moor because of its racist implications and association with the Arabs” (Bozkurt 2005: 45). Thus in modern Turkish translations of *Othello*, mostly the term “Mağripli” (the Moor) is used for the rendering of the term “the Moor”. However, whether the Turkish readers know what “Mağripli” exactly means is a debatable question. As Bozkurt points out, “In Ottoman Turkish...people would know where “Magrib” was, and what type of people lived there” (2005: 45). However, today the use of the term

“Mağripli” has made Othello “a more exotic and translucent personality than he had about a century ago” (Bozkurt 2005: 45).

It goes without saying that a significant issue in *Othello* is racism. In the racist ideology of Shakespeare’s time, “race often functions as a marker of religious difference” (Burton 1998: 56). I guess, this is why, Brabantio protests that if foreigners like Othello are allowed to marry Venetians, “Bond-slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be” (1.2.99). Moreover, the color of skin is, of course, an important aspect of the dominant racist discourse. As McEvoy states, “In 1600, the fairer the skin the greater the beauty; white skin connoted goodness, and black skin wickedness in the racial thinking of the time, too” (2000: 29). The following example from the play points to this issue:

DUKE — And, noble signior,  
If virtue no delighted beauty lack  
Your son-in-law is far more fair than black. (1.3.290-1)

DUKA — Ve aziz Sinyor, eğer fazilet güzellik yoksulu değilse, damadınız siyah olmaktan çok daha fazla beyazdır. (Burian, 28)

DUKA — Asil Sinyor, erdemli kişilere güzel deniyorsa, damadınız kara değil, basbayağı yakışıklı demektir. (Tamer, 17)

DUKA — Soylu sinyor, eğer erdem güzellikten yoksun değilse,  
Damadınız kara olmaktan çok aaktır. (Nutku, 52)

The only noteworthy manipulation is in Tamer’s rendering of the phrase “far more fair”. He has translated it as “basbayağı yakışıklı” (“pretty handsome”). It is obvious that this manipulation has partially effaced the concept of “fairness” as the binary opposition of “blackness”.

The final example I would like to discuss in this section is related to the hybrid identity of Othello. As I had mentioned above, he is a foreigner from a different culture trying to embrace a new culture. However, since he cannot completely erase his past culture, he inadvertently merges it with his new culture. The following example illustrates this aspect of his hybrid identity vividly:

OTHELLO — Amen to that, sweet powers! (2.1.193)  
OTHELLO — Bu duaya amin derim, ilâhi kuvvetler! (Burian, 43)  
OTHELLO — Dilerim öyle olsun. (Tamer, 25)  
OTHELLO — Öyle olmasını dilerim Tanrı’dan! (Nutku, 68)

Apparently, the phrase “Amen to that” belongs to his Christian half, and the phrase “sweet powers!” belongs to his “pagan” half. I think Shakespeare has merged these two different



religious expressions deliberately. Of course, this hybridity subverts the ideology of racism and monoculturalism.

Unfortunately, the hybridity in the above excerpt has been transferred into the Turkish text only in Burian's translation. Tamer has rendered this excerpt as "Dilerim öyle olsun" ("I wish it to be so"), and Nutku has translated it as "Öyle olmasını dilerim Tanrı'dan!" ("I wish from God that it would be so"). Needless to say, the hybridity in the source excerpt has been almost completely effaced in Tamer and Nutku's translations.

#### 4. Conclusion

To conclude, in this paper, I tried to explore how some of the ideologies, political discourses and "dissident stories" in *Othello* have been reconstructed in three Turkish translations. Although Bozkurt states that "in modern translations of Shakespeare's plays and poetry, deliberate censorship or modification of potentially offensive references, whether political, sexual, or otherwise, appears to be the exception rather than the rule (Bozkurt 46), and although his statement is tenable to a certain extent, we have seen that translators of *Othello* have not paid enough attention to the political and ideological dimensions of the play. In other words, it has appeared that ideological and political implications of *Othello* have not been rendered or reflected well enough in some parts of the Turkish translations.

Apart from these, if I attempt to make an overall evaluation of the three Turkish translations linguistically before concluding my paper, I can say that although all of them have a similar flavor as that of the English source text, they also (naturally) have considerable differences. For instance, Burian's text, being published in 1943, has a relatively older and more formal language than the other two translations, but perhaps that language was the norm of the 1940s. Evidently, Burian's text is the closest to the source text because of the translator's painstaking effort to produce a full translation in all respects.

My observation about Tamer's translation is that his language is more colloquial, and his text contains many more omissions than the other two translations. As I mentioned before, he seems to have favored a domesticating translation strategy. As for Nutku's translation, I have observed that he has used too many inversions in his text in order to create poeticality, and this has caused awkwardness in some parts of the text. He seems to have opted for a "heavily" source-oriented translation strategy, i.e., foreignizing translation, and this has caused some problems in the smooth running of his language.

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