

THE RECEPTION OF MODERN ISRAELI LITERATURE IN TURKEY¹

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Öz

Modern İsrail edebiyatından Türkçeye ilk olarak Samuel Yosef Agnon'un romanlarından çeviriler yapılmış, bunu diğer çeviriler izlemiştir. Efraim Kişon ve Amos Oz, Türkçeye eserleri en çok çevrilen İsraili yazarlar olmuştur. Modern İsrail edebiyatından Türkçeye yapılan çevirilerin daha çok hikâye ve roman türlerinden olduğunu ve bu çevirilerin büyük çoğunluğunun İbraniceden değil, Batı dillerinden yapıldığını görmekteyiz. Modern İsrail edebiyatı, ayrıca Türkiye'de, yorum ve incelemeler ile de tanınmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler:Modern İsrail Edebiyatı, Samuel Yosef Agnon, Efraim Kişon, Amos Oz, Türkiye.

Abstract

Samuel Josef Agnon is the first Israeli writer translated into Turkish. Most widely translated and most popular Israeli writers in Turkish are the satirist Efraim Kishon and the novelist Amos Oz. As to the literary genres, a big amount of the translated works into Turkish are novels and stories and there is a very little number of poetries. On the other hand we see that most of the Hebrew literary works in Turkish have been translated from their English or German editions and not from Hebrew, the original tongue of these works. In addition to these translations a number of literary critiques and reviews were written in Turkish on Modern Israeli literature.

Keywords: Modern Israeli Literature, Samuel Josef Agnon, Ephraim Kishon, Amos Oz, Turkey.

In this article, I would first like to inform the readers about the literary works translated from modern Israeli literature into Turkish, and then the

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articles and reviews on these works and on their writers, which have been published in Turkey. The most essential factor in the reception of the literature of a country in other countries is literary translations. The Israeli writers whose books have been translated into Turkish are Samuel Josef Agnon, Efraim Kishon, Amos Oz, Meir Shalev, Eli Amir, Etgar Keret, Sami Mihael, Abraham ben Yehoshua, David Grossman and Shifra Horn.

Samuel Josef Agnon is the first Israeli writer translated into Turkish. After he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1966, his works began to be translated into Turkish. One of his well-known works, *Oreah Nata Lalun* was translated into Turkish from its German edition by Tahir Alangu under the title *Bir Gecelik Misafir*, which can be translated as “A guest for one night”, in İstanbul, 1967, by Nobel Publishing and published in two volumes. Similarly, his works *İdo ve Enam* and *Shvuot Emunim* were translated into Turkish by Mete Ergin and published together under the title *Tılsım ve Sözlü* (Charm and Betrothed), in İstanbul, 1966 by Nobel Publishing. Another work by Agnon, *Ha Nidda*, was also translated by Tahir Alangu and published under the title *Kovulmuşlar*, (The Expelled), in İstanbul 1966 by Nobel Publishing. In the Introduction of this book brief information was given on Hebrew literature and Agnon.

Efraim Kishon is another Israeli writer, various works of whose have been translated into Turkish. However, the titles of the translated works may not exactly correspond with the titles of his original works. The Turkish translations are as follows: *Adanmış Topraklar Üstünde*, (On the Promised Land) translated by Adalet Cimcoz, and published in İstanbul 1969, by Varlık Publishing. *Katilini Seveceksin* (You will Love your Killer) was translated by Nejat Dalay and published in 1973 by Milliyet Publishing. *Ha Shual be Lul ha Tarnegolot* was translated by Moşe Beraze probably from Hebrew, under the title *Tavuk Kümesinde Tilki* (A Fox in the Coop), and published in İstanbul 1977 by Bilgi Publishing. *Kahkahaya Vergi Yok*, (No Tax for Laughter) was translated by Moshe Beraze and published in Ankara in 1983, by Bilgi Publishing. *Herkese Bir Bomba* (A Bomb for Everyone) was translated by Hale Kuntay and published in İstanbul 1985 by İnkılap Publishing. “Sevgili Yalancım” was translated by Hale Kuntay from the German edition “Mein Geliebter Lügner”- and published in İstanbul 1998 by Milliyet Publishing. “Kadın Aklı” (Women’s Mind) was translated by Hale Kuntay, and published in İstanbul 1987 by İnkılap Publishing. “Vergi Yükümlülerine Benden Selam” (A Salute from me to Taxpayers) translated by Hale Kuntay and published in İstanbul 1994 by İnkılap Publishing, “Gülecek Bir Şey Göremiyorum” translated from German “Nichts zu lachen” by Hale Kuntay, (I See no Reason to Laugh), and published in 1998

by Milliyet Publishing. “Başbakanı Kim Öptü”, (Who Kissed the Prime Minister) translated by Moshe Beraze and published in İstanbul 1990 by Bilgi Publishing, “Peki Öğleden Sonra Ne Yapacağız?” translated by Hale Kuntay from German “Und was machen wir am Nachmittag?” (And what are we doing in the afternoon) published in İstanbul 2000 by Doğan Publishing, “Can Boğazdan Gelir: Dünyanın İkinci Büyük Zevki Hakkında Öyküler”, (Good Food is the Back Bone of Life: Stories about the Second Greatest Taste of the World) translated by Hale Kuntay, Doğan Publishing, İstanbul 2001.

As for the famous Israeli novelist Amos Oz, various works of him have been translated into Turkish. His translated works are as follows: *Fima* was translated from English by Çiğdem Aka and published under the same title in İstanbul 1996 by Can Publishing, *Ladaat İsha* was translated from its English edition *To Know a Woman* by Gülçin Akdemir and published as *Bir Kadını Tanımak*, in İstanbul 1996 by Can Publishing. *Mikhael Sheli* was translated from English by Gülçin Akdemir and published under the title *Michael ile Hanna* (Michael and Hannah), in İstanbul 1999 by Can Publishing. *Sipur al Ahava ve Hosheh* was translated by Gülden Şen from its English version *Love and Darkness* and published under the title *Aşk ve Karanlık*, in İstanbul 2002 by Doğan Publishing. *Soumghi* was translated by Üzeyir Gündüz from its English edition and published as “Bisikletim İlk Aşkım” (My Bicycle My First Love) in Ankara 2006 by Harf Eğitim Publishing. *Kufsa Shahora* was translated by Cem Alpan and published under the title *Kara Kutu* (The Black Box) by Doğan Publishing, İstanbul 2008. Amos Oz’s short story “Derekh ha Ruah” was translated by Mahir Ünsal Eriş from its original Hebrew version as *Böyle Eser Durur* (It Blows on and on) and published in a compilation of short stories titled *Dile Kolay Öyküler/Masallar*, Pan Publishing, İstanbul 2009.

As to Meir Shalev, his novel *Ke yamim Ahadim* was translated by Saliha Nilüfer from its English edition *Four Meals* and published under the Turkish title *Dört Ziyafet* in İstanbul, 2003 by İletişim Publishing.

Regarding Sami Mihael, his novel *Yonim be Tarafalgar* was translated into Turkish by Nita Kurrant and published as *Nabila*, in İstanbul 2008 by Goa Publishing.

Eli Amir is another Israeli writer translated into Turkish. Two novels of him were published in Turkish. These are *Tarnegol Kaparot* translated by Kahraman Türel as *Günah Keçisi*, (The Scapegoat) and published in 2010 by Apollon Publishing and *Jasmin* translated by Nita Kurrant, under the same title and published in İstanbul 2006 by Goa Publishing.

As for Avraham ben Yehoshua, his novel *Meahev* was translated by Mehmet Harmancı, from its English version *Lover* under the title *Kaybolan Aşık* (Lost Lover) and published in İstanbul 1995 and published by Gözlem Press and Publishing.

Regarding David Grossman, his non-fictional work *Ha Zman Ha Tsahov* was translated from its English version *The Yellow Wind* as *Korku İle Nefret Arasında* (Between Fear and Hatred) by Mehmet Harmancı, and published İstanbul 1992 by Cep Books. His mythological work *Dvash Araiot* was translated from the English edition *Lion's Honey* as *Aslan'ın Balı*, by Dilek Şendil, Merkez Kitapçılık, İstanbul 1998. His novel *Yesh Yeladim Zigzag* was translated as *Zikzak Yumurcak* (The Brat), by Figen Dereli, Dost Kitabevi, Ankara 2007.

As for Etgar Keret, his story collection *Anihu* was translated from its English version *The Nimrod Flip-Out* as *Nimrod Çıldırışları* by Avi Pardo, Parantez, İstanbul 2008). And his shared work with Samir al Yusuf, *Gaza Blues* was translated as *Gaza Blues* from its English edition by Avi Pardo, Siren Publishing, İstanbul 2009.

Concerning Shifra Horn, the Israeli woman writer, her novel *Arba İmahot* was translated from its English version *Four Mothers* as *Dört Kadın* by Fethi Aytuna, Apollon Yayıncılık, 2010. Her novel *Ha Yafa Ba Nashim* was translated from its English version *The Fairest Among Woman* as *Kadınların En Güzeli*, by Kahraman Türel, Apollon Publishing, 2010.

As to the translations from modern Israeli short stories into Turkish, a collection of modern Israeli stories was translated by Moshe Beraze from Hebrew as *Çağdaş İsrail Edebiyatı: Öyküler* (Contemporary Israeli Literature: Short Stories) and published in 1977. The book declared that it was published by the support of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture in New York. The Introduction of the book provides brief information on modern Israeli literature. The book contains stories by Binyamin Tamuz, Yehuda Amihai, Avraham B. Yehoshua, Haim Hazaz, Nessim Aloni, Aharon Megged, Shulamit Hareven, Natan Shaham. The book also provides brief information on each writer.

Another collection of short stories from Israeli writers of Savyon Liebrecht, Mira Magen, Leah Aini, Orly Castel-Bloom, Yehuda Amihai, Amos Oz, Amalia Cahana Karmon, Aharon Magged, Yossi Birstein, Etgar Keret, Nissim Aloni, Nava Semel was translated from the Hebrew and English editions and published in Turkish under the title *İsrailli Yazarlardan Seçme Öyküler* (Selected Stories by Israeli Writers) Gözlem Publishing, İstanbul 1991.

Another collection contains examples from various Hebrew and Yiddish writers such as I.L.Peretz, Shalom Aleichem, Isaac Babel, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Emanuel Litvinoff, and Amos Oz and was published in Turkish as *Yahudi Öyküleri* (Jewish Stories) translated by Hakan Güneş, Arion Yayınları, İstanbul 1994.

Examples from modern Israeli poets Haim Guri (“Kralın Ölümü” Death of the King), Anedad Eldan (“Leke Surat”- Stain Face-) Tuva River (“Gene Güneş”-Again Sun-), Uri Bernstein (“Konuşmalar”- Talks-), was published in Turkish in Varlık Magazine of June 1975.

As to the books that deal with the history of modern Israeli literature, Gershon Shaked’s *Hassiporet Ha İvrit 1880-1980* was translated from its German edition by Bedrettin Aytaç as *Modern İbrani Edebiyatı Tarihi: Nesir 1880- 1980* (History of Modern Hebrew Literature: Prose 1880- 1980), Phoenix, Ankara 2007.

Regarding the articles about the writers or the translations of pieces of modern Israeli literature, we see Samuel Josef Agnon as the first Israeli writer to be written about in Turkey. In January 4, 1967, in the newspaper of Şalom, the mouthpiece of the Jewish community in Turkey, an article was published by Beki L. Bahar, under the title of “Samuel Jozef Agnon...Nelly Sachs” to acknowledge Agnon’s being awarded the Nobel prize of the year 1966. In this article, Bahar states that the Nobel Prize at that year was shared between Agnon and Sachs, the two Jewish writers. He also emphasizes that to speak of this event was the duty of Şalom newspaper before any other newspapers. Here he gives a brief information about Agnon, then moves on to Nelly Sachs, the other Nobel prize winner of the year and gives examples from her poetry and plays as well as some information about her life (Bahar, 1967: 2).

The Turkish literary critic Doğan Hızlan, in his article titled “İsrail’de Orhan Pamuk Okunuyor” (“In Israel Orhan Pamuk is read”) published in March 19, 2001 in Hürriyet newspaper, deals with the translations of Orhan Pamuk’s works into Hebrew and he also dwells on the reception of Israeli literature in Turkey. He states that Israeli literature in Turkey started to be known via Agnon, who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966, followed by Kishon, Abraham Yehoshua and Amos Oz. He also mentions in his article that he had once read an article that says there is a sign in the street where Agnon lives in Israel, which reads “here works the famous writer Agnon, please do not make noise”, which he found impressive (Hızlan, 1999).

Another article about Agnon is by Coya Delevi, published in the newspaper of Şalom on June, 6, 2008 titled “Bir Kitap Etkinliği ve S. J.

Agnon” (A Reading Event and Samuel Josef Agnon”). It was written on the occasion of Israel’s being the honorary guest of Salon du Livre de Paris that took place between March 14-18 and that Agnon was commemorated in this event. Here she gives brief information about Agnon’s life and states that descriptions in Agnon’s works are colorful and lively like an oil painted painting. She also gives information about his work *Oreah Nata Lalun* that was translated into Turkish from German and emphasizes that this long novel deals with the trouble of the European Jews on the eve of the First World War through flashbacks. Delevi also gives citations from this novel. She asserts that in her second reading of the novel, she found that its style was not plain as she observed earlier, but it presents a deeper meaning through religious symbols (Delevi, 2008).

As for Efraim Kishon, a review on his *Adanmış Topraklar Üstünde* (On the Promised Land) was written in April 1969 by Muzaffer Uyguner. Uyguner says that Kishon in these stories criticizes Israeli bureaucracy and that this shows a similarity with the fact in Turkey, as he thinks many situations in the stories of Kishon exist in Turkey. He adds that the book gives us information about both Israeli literature and Kishon’s personality. In addition, Uyguner says that he thinks the language of the translation is a beautiful one (Uyguner, 1969: 33).

Another article about Kishon was published in February, 6, 2005, following his death, by Cihan Demirci in Radikal newspaper under the title “Kishon’un Ardından” (After Kishon). At the beginning of his article Demirci maintains that Kishon was a Holocaust survivor and cites from his words that the Nazis made a mistake by giving a satirist a chance to survive. Demirci also states that Kishon became popular in Turkey in 1970’s and was largely compared with Aziz Nesin, the famous Turkish satirist. He also asserts that Kishon’s books were translated into 38 languages and gives a list of the Turkish translations (Demirci, 2005).

Another article on Efraim Kishon was published in Şalom newspaper on November, 5, 1969 by Daniel Yahya titled “Adanmış Topraklar Üstünde Nikah Kağıdı” (Wedding Certificate on the Promised Land). In this article, Yahya says that Kishon made an autocritic of the Jews from the view of a satirist and emphasizes that he didn’t hesitate to write about the positive and the negative sides of his own nation. He adds that Kishon’s themes were not limited to the Israeli themes and that he also satirized other nations successfully. He gives Kishon’s work “Wedding certificate on the promised land” as an example. Here he says that Kishon criticizes Egyptians’ exaggerating and presenting extraordinary stories of their military success (Yahya, 1969:2).

In Varlık magazine of August 1972, Talat Sait Halman, the critic, published an article titled “Çağdaş Orta Doğu Edebiyatı” (Contemporary Middle East Literature). In this article, he gives facts about modern Israeli literature as well as modern Arabic and Persian literatures. Regarding Israeli literature, he deals with the use of themes from the Torah, the use of the motif of the moral fall of human beings in some Israeli literary pieces through religious themes and symbols from the Torah, and Agnon’s use of a mystic tongue and a semi-religious color in some of his works. He says that the Turkish poet Orhan Veli and the Israeli poet Zalman Snör describe the ordinary man on the street as friendly and a hero. He underlines the common aspects of the Iranian Muhammad Hijazi, Israeli Kishon and Turkish Aziz Nesin. He mentions Agnon and Orpaz from Israel, al Hakim and Najib Mahfouz from Egypt, Nazım Hikmet, Fazıl Hüsnu Dağlarca and Kemal Tahir from Turkey and Sadeq Hidayet from Iran as writers avoiding imitation of the west and making an original cultural synthesis of various cultural layers. He also conceives of contemporary Israeli theatre as vivid. He also adds that an intensive activity of translation exists in Turkey and in Israel (Halman, 1972:20).

Another Israeli writer that Turkish critics have written about is Amos Oz. In the magazine of Haksöz of February 2007, Asım Öz, in his article “Amos Oz Şimdi Barış Hareketinin Romancısı” which can be translated as “Amos Oz, the Novelist of ‘Peace Now Action’” presents Oz’s views on the ways to make peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Öz says that Amos Oz condemns Israeli “fanaticism” but doesn’t deny the Zionist ideology, which he considers the essential factor of the existence of Israel. Later on, he makes critiques about the translations of *Fima*, *Michael and Hannah* and *Ladaat Isha*. Öz asserts that Oz’s works have contributions to creating a critical viewpoint on Israel, and that the tragedy of Israeli intellectuals form the basis of his works (Öz, 2007:69-74).

Amos Oz’s visit to Turkey in April 2006, as a guest of the Turkish Prime Minister found an echo in the Turkish press. As an example in Milliyet newspaper of April 7, 2006, Ece Temelkuran the columnist, in her article titled “Amos Oz’la Sabah: Yara Politikası”, (Morning with Amos Oz: The Policy of Injury) conveys her notes about the press conference of Amos Oz with a group of Turkish journalists following his reception by the Turkish Prime Minister. Temelkuran says that Amos Oz underlined in this meeting his aspirations for the positive role that Turkey can play regarding the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Temelkuran says Oz also asserted that the Europeans also are trying to find a solution to this problem through meetings but they have not been successful yet (Temelkuran, 2006).

In the magazine of Aksiyon of April,10, 2006, an interview made with Amos Oz by Kerim Balcı and Muhsin Öztürk under the title “İsrail Rüyası

Gerçekleşince Tadı Kaçtı (The Moment the Israeli Dream Came True it went Sour) was published. This article reports the responds of Amos Oz to questions on his work *Sipur al Ahava va Hosheh*, concerning the Turk image in Israeli literature and the Israeli identity and emphasizes Oz's approach which aims at a coexistence of the Israelis and the Palestinians (Balci, Öztürk, 2006).

The article by Virna Banastey Gümüşgerdan, published in Şalom newspaper of May 26, 2010, titled "Aşk ve Karanlık Barışa Işık Tutabilecek mi?" "Can Love and Darkness illuminate peace?", deals with the Arabic translation of Oz's *Sipur al Ahava va Hosheh*. In this article she says that the translator of *Sipur al Ahava va Hosheh* to Arabic Elias Khoury is a Palestinian who lost his father and his son in a Palestinian terrorist attack and that he initiated this Project of translation in order to survive his memory. Gümüşgerdan cites Elias Khoury's words in the Introduction of the book: "The Jews reborn from the tragedy of holocaust reorganized themselves and became an independent state. So, we can drive lessons from that" (Gümüşgerdan, 2010).

One of the Israeli writers Turkish critics have written about is Eli Amir. In Şalom newspaper of January,7,2009, Tuna Saylağ published an article about Eli Amir, titled "Eli Amir *Yasmin*'i Anlattı: Herkes Hayata Ötekinin Penceresinden Bakmayı Öğrenmeli" which can be translated as "Eli Amir told about *Yasmin*: Everybody should learn to look at life from the others' window". In this article, Saylağ tells about her impressions from Eli Amir's conference on his novel *Yasmin* held in Işık University in Istanbul. Additional information about Eli Amir is also provided in the article (Saylağ, 2009).

Regarding Sami Mihael's novel *Nabila*, an article titled "Güvercinler Gibi Tedirgin", "Anxious as Pigeons", was published by Senem Kale in Radikal Book supplement in February,1, 2008. In this article, information about the theme of the novel and also about the life of the author has been given. It has been emphasized that Sami Mihael is the head of the Human Rights Organization of Israel and in 2005 he was declared as a candidate for the Nobel Prize and successfully describes both countries' desire to live in peace together (Kale, 2008).

A review on the Turkish version of Etgar Keret's "Nimrod Flip-Out" was published by Fırat Aydın on January, 20, 2009, on the site www.tramvayduragi.com/tr-nimrod-flip-out . Fırat Aydın says that these stories of Keret are not tedious but thought-provoking and have easy – going

style and that Keret uses stream-of-consciousness technique in every part of his novel and gives citations from his story titled "Bottle".

Following the Israeli operation to the Turkish ship of Mavi Marmara on May 31, 2010, Turkish-Israeli relations have been questioned in Turkish media and articles referring to the peaceful thoughts of Amos Oz have been published. In Milliyet newspaper of June, 4, 2010, Hasan Cemal published an article titled "Barışı ve İsraili Zehirleyen Güçle Çıkış Yolu" which can be translated as "The way Out with the power that poisons Peace and Israel" and emphasized in this article that Amos Oz is a peace activist and referred to his opinions that ideas cannot be abolished by force and that not only Jews but also Palestinians have been living in Israel, including Jerusalem. We can say that Amos Oz's views regarding the ways to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are found interesting in Turkey.

In Zaman newspaper's monthly book supplement of July 2010, an interview on the operation to Mavi Marmara, titled "İsraili Yazarlardan Barış Çağrısı" which can be translated as "An Invitation to the Peace From the Israeli writers", made with the well known Israeli writers such as Amos Oz, Avraham Ben Yehoshua, David Grossmann, Etgar Keret, Sami Mihael, Meir Shalev, Eli Amir, Alon Hilu, Evan Fallenberg, Avrum Burg, the head of the Institution for the Translation of the Hebrew Literature Nilli Cohen and the Israeli Publisher Rachel Edelman, Turkish Israeli relationship and the role of the literature in this context was published. These people have stressed that Turkey's role as a mediator between the Arab world and Israel should continue and also underlined the status of the literature as a bridge between societies. They also expressed the necessity for the betterment of the ties between Turkey and Israel and their hopes for that (Yüce, 2010:8-15).

As a result, we can say that most widely translated and most popular Israeli writers in Turkish are the satirist Efraim Kishon and the novelist Amos Oz. Besides his novels that reflect the Israeli society successfully, also due to his articles regarding the Israeli Palestinian conflict Amos Oz can be seen as the most popular Israeli writer in 1990's and 2000's.

As to the literary genres, a big amount of the translated works into Turkish are novels and stories and there is a very little number of poetries. On the other hand we see that most of the Hebrew literary works in Turkish have been translated from their English or German editions and not from Hebrew, the original tongue of these works. The reason for this is the very insufficient numbers of those who have an ability to make literary translations from Hebrew into Turkish.

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