

TRANSLATION AS A TOOL OF CONSTRUCTING  
INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS:  
A CASE STUDY ON THE RELATION BETWEEN  
TURKISH AND CUBAN CULTURES \*

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ABSTRACT

*With the cultural turn in Translation Studies, it has been accepted that translation is not just a linguistic but also a cultural activity. This cultural activity can appear in various forms such as a positive and constructive interaction or an asymmetrical power relation including assimilation, conquest and/or colonial activities between cultures. Literature, translation and translated literature can be used as a tool or strategy in this spectrum of complicated relations. The agents/actors taking an active role in these relations have become an object of study in Translation Studies as well as in all other fields of Social Sciences. Using his agent role as an ambassador, Ernesto Gomez Abascal wrote a fictional novel titled Havana'da Türk Tutkusu 1898 (Turkish Passion in Havana 1898) drawing inspiration from historical facts to construct a positive Turkish image in Spanish and Cuban literature and culture. Abascal was inspired by the future translator of the novel, Mehmet Necati Kutlu to write this book. Kutlu, who is an academician and an agent fostering the relations between Turkey and Latin American countries, reported his findings to Abascal about the Ottoman Empire and Cuban relations. Inspired by this information, Abascal wrote a fiction based on these historical records. This article will try to analyze the role of literature, translation and agents in the process of constructing cultural images through this example.*

*Keywords*

*Translation, cultural image, the image of Turks, Cuban Culture, intercultural relations.*

## 1. Theoretical Framework

This part of the study deals with the different conceptualizations and positions of “culture” and “agent” in translation studies and social sciences

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in general to determine the theoretical framework. The second part discusses the role of agents in intercultural relations and cultural representation.

### 1.1. The Concept of Culture in Social Sciences

Culture is an object of study in different fields of social sciences such as sociology, literature and language studies, psychology and history. Even though each discipline evaluates culture from its own point of view with its own peculiar questions, culture, as a common object, leads interdisciplinary areas in social sciences. However, it does not necessarily mean that they share a common definition of culture. Different paradigms define culture in accordance with its context, which makes the definition of culture dynamic. For instance, British anthropologist J. B. Tyler refers to the constituents like "knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities" in definition of culture with an emphasis on the acquirers of those elements as "member[s] of society (1870: 1 in Avruch 1998: 6). This definition of culture focuses on membership and social identity. Strongly affected by structuralism and behaviouralism, A. L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn define culture as following: "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols [...] culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action" (1952: 181; in Adler 1997: 14). Binary oppositions on surface and deep level and concepts such as action, system and element are indicators of this influence.

Differing from this modernist and structuralist approach, David Matsumoto defines culture "[...] the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next" (1996: 16). In this definition, heterogeneous, individualistic and subjective side of culture, which is open to interpretation, is focused on with postmodernist approach. Criticizing Eurocentric discourse on culture, multiculturalism has gained popularity with the help of postcolonialist approach. When it comes to 2000's, Spencer-Oatey's definition of culture is even more flexible:

"Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and [...]"

interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour." (2008: 3; Spencer-Oatey, 2012: 2)

As it is seen above, culture is nowadays being analyzed in terms of nationalities, ethnic sub-cultures, belief systems, social roles and gender issues together with the concept of identity. Additionally, sociologist Stuart Hall takes a further step and defines culture depending on positionality. He also defines identity as "a temporary position where one invests in a public space to act and speak" (1997: 33). Within this perspective, culture and identity are currently being considered relative, contextualized and dynamic entities with the effect of postmodernism.

### **1.1. The Concept of Culture in Translation Theories**

Until the rise of Descriptive Approach, the act of translation had been considered just an interlingual act. Descriptive Approach and Target-Oriented Theory underlined that translation was not just an interlingual but also an intercultural process including social agents in both cultures. Theories of Gideon Toury (1985, 2002) and Itamar Even-Zohar (1987) addressed the expectancies of target culture and the role of cultural agents named as "agents of change" (Toury, 2002: 150).

Later, these theories were criticized due to being too deterministic and are being improved with concepts such as the notion of "habitus" by Pierre Bourdieu who considers translation as a "cultural action". Habitus is a kind of social identity determining translational norms and actions of translators. Jean Marc Gouanvic claims that habitus "cannot be interpreted separately from its rapport with the foreign culture, which [...] is transmitted through translation and tends to dictate a new orientation in the receiving culture, a new social future" (2005: 164). Seeing translation as a cultural action, Translation Studies currently analyzes the role of institutions and cultural agents in the processes of selection, translation and circulation and consumption of the texts (ibid). So, translation is a production having external and internal dimensions, which sometimes confront with each other (Gouanvic, 2005: 164). The dispositions, namely habitus, of the translator affect how s/he will mediate and negotiate between these dimensions. Also, cultural acceptance, authority and recognition of translators and other cultural agents can affect the process, which Bourdieu explains with the terms of symbolic and social capital (Gouanvic, 2005: 161). It is widely accepted that

translation is a cultural activity; however, the definitions and boundaries of culture and the scope of methodologies studying culture are diverse both diachronically and synchronically.

### **1.2. The Concept of Agent in Social Sciences**

The relation between individual and society has been a controversial topic in all fields of Social Sciences since the very first writings of social science disciplines. As an example, Max Weber tried to solve “how human beings give meaning to the world” by analyzing the reasons for social action (Brettell, 2002: 438). Specific settings of human action such as socio-economic and socio-political circumstances undoubtedly affect the actions and perception of human beings. Additionally, social structure inevitably influences individuals’ behavior patterns and their self-representation.

Radcliffe-Brown defines a “person” as “an occupying position in a social structure” (1952: 9-10 in Brettell, 2002: 438). Thus, differentiating an agent from society or an individual from community is not so easy. After this first wave of agency with Weber and Durkheim, the second wave emerged with the theories of Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu, and to be followed by the feminist approach (ibid.). The common point between Giddens and Bourdieu is their attempt to “mediate the objective and the subjective, the group and the individual” (Barnard 2000: 142 in Brettell, 2002: 439). They handle the concepts of agency and the group dynamic rather than static.

In Literature and Translation Studies, agents determine the process of production. Anthropologist Sarah Lamb says that “the narrative presentation of self and culture is a creative social practice” in which people “reflect, exercise agency, contest interpretations of things, and make meanings” (2001: 28). It can be deduced that self-definition is relational depending on one’s position in the social and cultural context. Social and individual can be studied as intertwined counterparts, which are going to be mentioned again via Bourdieu in the following parts of the article.

### **1.3. The Concept of Agent in Translation Studies**

Juan Sager defines agents as a person “in an intermediary position between a translator and an end user of translation” (1994: 321). The agent can have a central role in all stages of a translation process starting from the beginning by selecting the source language, text and author to the final stage

of circulation and reception of the target text. Translators, publishers, editors, teachers, politicians, patrons, ministers, poets, authors, literary critics, academicians and commissioners can be agents of a translation. In addition to individuals or institutions, bureaus and companies can also act like an agent. John Milton defines agents as “individuals who devote great amount of energy, and even their own lives, to the cause of foreign literature, author or literary school, translating, writing articles, teaching and diffusing” (2009: 133). Agents have the potential to create changes and trigger cultural innovation, which may be risky as well. John Milton and Paul Bandia categorize agents into two: “those who have affected changes in styles of translation, have broadened the range of translations available, or who have helped or attempted to innovate by selecting new works to be translated and introducing new styles of translation” (2009: 2).

One of the related terms with agent is the concept of “patronage” by André Lefevere. He defines patronage as “a religious body, a political party, a social class, a royal court, publishers, and, last but not least, the media, both newspapers and magazines and larger television corporations” (1992: 15). If the patronage is differentiated in a society, various patrons appear in different social fields. However, if patronage is undifferentiated, it means a totalitarian system with an ultimate patron (1992: 15-16).

Another concept is asymmetrical power relations coined by Rosemary Arrojo. There can be an asymmetrical power relation between the source and target culture. In these kinds of socio-politically sensitive situations, agents tend to use translation as a tool to balance relations or protest the current situation. Manipulative translations are examples of translational activism. In her article titled “Translation and Political Engagement: Activism, Social Change and the Role Translation in Geopolitical Shifts”, Maria Tymoczko (2000) points out translation has a political side and translators can be politically engaged in their process. In parallel with this perspective, Haroldo and Augusto de Campos (1981) brothers coined the term “cannibalistic translation” for the asymmetrical power relations and the role of translation in Brazilian context. H el ene Buzelin’s article titled “Unexpected Allies: How Latour’s Network Theory Could Complement Bourdieusian Analyses in Translation Studies” (2005) is a new attempt to analyze agents with an eclectic theoretical framework combining Pierre Bourdieu and Bruno Latour.

About the role of translation in the modernization process of countries, Özlem Berk Albachten (2004) highlights that modernization process in Turkey was supported by translations from the Western languages. Işın Bengi Öner (1989), who is one of the pioneers of the scholars studied Translation History, analyzed the translation activities and the role of Ahmed Midhat Efendi as a mediator between Ottoman culture and Western cultures in her paper titled "The Eloquent Mediator: Ahmed Midhat Efendi" which was published in proceedings of the XIIth Congress of the International Comparative Association (see also Bengi Öner, 2006). Cemal Demircioğlu also researched Ahmed Midhat as an agent in the late Ottoman Period with his translations, rewritings, interlingual and intralingual summaries of European source texts. Ahmed Midhat was an "Ottoman novelist, translator, publisher, journalist and the owner of the newspaper *Tercüman-ı Hakikat [Interpreter of Truth]*" (Demircioğlu, 2009: 131). Demircioğlu calls him a "cultural entrepreneur", "a good example of provocative agency", "a mediator in conveying Western culture to Ottoman society by performing different forms of translation practices (2009, 131-132).

Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar (2009) analyzed another Turkish agent, Hasan Ali Yücel who had a central role in the westernization period in Turkey with the help of translations done in Translation Bureau. Yücel was the Minister of Education (between the years of 1938 and 1946) and a member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Translation Bureau produced "1247 translations from mainly Western and Eastern classics" (Tahir-Gürçağlar, 2009: 161). Yücel also launched translation Journal *Tercüme* (ibid).

## 2. Translating Culture And Cultural Representation

Itamar Even-Zohar (2002a) shed light into the role of agents in creating cultural repertoires because they have the power to choose among options as decision-makers in the literary polysystem. By doing so, a cultural planning enters into force in a society. It can be deduced that not only the texts but also the culture and cultural representations are translated and transferred from a source culture to a target one.

In Turkey, cultural import is a key topic in Translation Studies due to modernization process in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic. Cemal

Demircioğlu states that “the cultural and literary items from a model culture may be transferred by means of free agents of translation [...] especially to a culture which is in the process of shifting civilization” (2009: 132). In the paradigm shifts of countries, agents are like catalyzers initiating and circulating the process. Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar reminds that “some individuals may appear to have no direct connection with translation, yet a closer look reveals that they impact the selection, production and reception of translations through their cultural practices” (2009: 162). This is also an evidence for the fact that the thing to be translated is not just a text but a cultural production and cultural policies. These agents are named as “agents of change” by Gideon Toury (2002: 151). Tahir Gürçağlar calls them “individuals who are equipped with special assets and abilities-to use Pierre Bourdieu’s terminology, special types of ‘capital’” (2009: 164). This capital can be cultural, economic and/or symbolic.

When translating texts, we translate not only texts but also cultures. Sueda Özbent (2015) highlights the ideas of German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder on culture and stresses that cultures can be positioned differently and they can oppose, ignore or struggle with each other. Referring to Wolfgang Iser (2009), she also reminds that the borders among cultures can be blurry due to coexistence. Özbent believes that translators are “experts acting transculturally” and the factors enabling or hindering translational communication should be taken into consideration (2015: 14). Translation also has a role in encountering the foreign and creating a third space of understanding namely; “fusion of the horizons” in hermeneutics. An individual becomes an individual and constructs an identity by encountering the different selves highlighting her/his difference idiosyncratically. Hermeneutics offers us being open and tolerant to these encounters with an active listening to understand. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989) claims that human beings innovate something new into being by referring to something familiar.

In addition to intercultural interaction, André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett (1992) consider translation as a rewriting to introduce new genres and concepts or manipulating ideas. These new genres and concepts can be used for ideological reasons. This cultural transference is not always an ethical act between two equal powers. Affected by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1813/1963), Lawrence Venuti (1995) stresses this asymmetrical relation as an

unethical situation by referring to it as “the ethnocentric violence of translation”. Postcolonial and Feminist Translation Approaches also base their theoretical framework on the violence hidden in representations of all kinds such as representation of African people, representation of women and representation of minor cultures. It is declared that translation is not always a philosophical, hermeneutical listening between two cultures in an innocent, equal way; however, it can be a tool for constructing cultural images and reproducing social cognitions.

With the concept of foreignisation, Antoine Berman (2000) offers a source-oriented approach to keep the foreign elements in translation and names it “the trial of the foreign”. These foreign elements can be accepted or rejected or there can be a negotiation process between the source and target cultures<sup>1</sup>. Postcolonial Approach in Translation Studies handles translation in two ways: the first one is a tool to colonize people and the second one is a resistant tool to decolonize the subaltern. It should be noted that they also use translation as a metaphor for transformation process of subaltern identities. Venuti offers foreignisation strategy as a way to resist Anglo-American cultural hegemony, which leads cleansing of all cultural differences hidden in the strategy of domestication.

Postcolonial Studies in Translation agrees with Venuti’s offer of ethical foreignisation<sup>2</sup>. Scholars in postcolonial approach such as Tejaswini Niranjana, Douglas Robinson, Samia Mehrez and Gayatri Spivak offered to use foreignisation in translation as a tool of resistance to the colonizer. In addition to these postcolonial theorists, Edwin Gentzler, Susan Bassnett, Harish Trivedi, Maria Tymoczko and Eric Cheyfitz can be listed as the influencers for the “power turn” in Translation Studies (Gentzler & Tymoczko, 2002: xiii-xvi). The selection, translation and the perception of a text can be manipulated by power relations in and between cultures. Nancy Morejón underlines that these relations between cultures can appear in

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<sup>1</sup> See also: Taş, Seda, “Çeviribilimde İkili Karşıtlıkları Yeniden Değerlendirmek: Çevirmenin “Görünürlüğü”/“Görünmezliği” ve “Yerileştirme”/“Yabancılaştırma”, *Tarih Okulu Dergisi*, 2019, XXXVIII, pp. 94-121 Doi Number :<http://dx.doi.org/10.14225/Joh1505>

<sup>2</sup> There are also some criticisms and reservations about Venuti’s offer because foreignisation may not be necessarily ethical leading to the visibility of the translator in different contexts as a predetermined way.



different forms such as “colonial imposition, obligatory assimilation, genocide, political cooptation, passive resistance and outright rebellion” (Morejón, 2005: 968). Also, the reactions to the dominant culture can be in various forms such as “mimicry, commercial exploitation, top-down appropriation, and bottom-up subversion (irony, parody, pastiche, carnival, open revolt)” (Stam & Shohat, 1994: 41 in Morejón, 2005: 968).

In the article titled “Thinking-Across, Infiltration, and Transculturation: José Martí’s Theory and Practice of Post-Colonial Translation in New York”, Laura Lomas (2011) questions reciprocal cultural influence and its asymmetrical ways and methods. Transculturation is a new coinage for the reaction of combining the dominant and subaltern culture to have a hybrid one in between. In this third area, subaltern culture deconstructs the dominant one and turns it into a positive new transcultural area. Morejón stresses that transculturation creates “constant interaction, transmutation between two more cultural components, whose unconscious end is the creation of a third cultural whole; that is, a culture new and independent, although its roots rest on preceding elements” (2005: 967). As a form of socio-cultural protest and resistance, the hermeneutical perspective of transculturation leads to racial, historical, and cultural translation (Morejón, 2005: 967). Translingualism or linguistic miscegenation, as deliberate reproduction of a hybrid language combining dominant and subaltern languages, is a performance of transculturation<sup>3</sup>. Transculturation is a reaction against negative cultural images created by dominant cultures during the translation process with the strategy of domestication or orientalist, Eurocentric discourse that constructs a certain social cognition in both source and target cultures in terms of cultural images and cultural representation.

Another approach using translation for resistance is feminist translation studies. Feminist translation theories question translational ethics of sameness and offer manipulation of texts as a form of rebellion. Emek Ergun states that “translation (as a feminist praxis) is embraced as a tool and model

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<sup>3</sup> for further information: Yılmaz Kutlay, Sevcan, “The Autonomy of Literary Translator in Terms of Aesthetics and Ethics”, *International Journal of Languages Education*, 8 (3), online 2020d, pp.145-157.

of cross-border dialogue, resistance, solidarity and activism in pursuit of justice and equality for all" (in Baker 2013a: 23). Like postcolonial perspective, translation is considered a tool or strategy of resistance to struggle for women's rights. Especially, feminist translators use manipulative translation strategy deliberately, which also generates a discussion of ethics. However, Ergun claims that translation is "a never -neutral or- innocent act of disinterested mediation, but rather, an important means of producing identities, knowledge and cross-cultural encounters" (Ergun in Baker 2013: 23). Thus, translational ethics needs a more comprehensive perspective taking into account the rights of the suppressed. As it is seen in both postcolonial and feminist translation studies, differing from cultural turn, critical turn in Translation Studies focuses on the role of translation as subject construction as transferring or manipulating not only cultural but also individualistic images and representations.

### 3. A Case Study On The Relation Between Turkish And Cuban Cultures

#### 3.1. Turkish Image in Spanish and Cuban Literature

Latin America may seem distant to Turkish culture both culturally and geographically. Additionally, there is a political distance because the political relations between Latin American countries and Turkey were limited until twenty-first century. Before that period, "Latin American-Ottoman relations had begun by the mid-nineteenth century through the consular network based in Washington" (Önsoy, 2017: 239).

According to Kutlu et al., the diplomatic relations between Brazil and the Ottoman Empire started in 1850 when Samuel Efendi was appointed to Rio de Janeiro as an Honorary Consul (2012: 37). The relations between the Ottoman Empire and Venezuela began in 1880s; however, Venezuelan President José Antonio Páez's letter written in 1857 to Sultan Abdülmecit was considered the first recorded diplomatic correspondence (Önsoy, 2017: 243-4).

In the mid-nineteenth-century, immigration of Ottoman subjects to America was the starting point. Pedro the Second, who was the Emperor of Brazil, visited the Ottoman Empire and invited Ottoman people to Brazil for the lack of labor force in agriculture in 1877 (Önsoy, 2017: 239). These

immigrants were named "Turcos" in the host countries (Önsoy, 2017: 240). The first diplomatic relation between Cuba and Ottoman Empire was in 1868 about a travel document. In 1873, the Ottoman Empire sent a consul to Cuba and there were nearly 4.000 Ottoman subjects in Cuba by 1890 (Önsoy, 2017: 244).

Cuban Former Ambassador Ernesto G. Abascal noted that "Abdülhamid II closely followed the incidents in Cuba, and in 1882, sent a delegation to gather information [...] to see if any of the measures taken by the Spanish would be useful to suppress the insurgents in Crete" (2009: 20; Önsoy, 2017: 244). Thus, it can be thought that for Ottoman Empire, Cuba is a distant country but it can be a parallel political example to study for the incidents in Crete.

In the Ottoman period, books and documents on Spanish culture were generally about Andalusia due to religious reasons. Ziya Pasha translated a book series named *The History of Andalusia (Endülüüs Tarihi)* in 1859. Namık Kemal was one of the names who wrote about Andalusia. Another well-known author was Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan who wrote a play called "Tarık yahud Endülüüs Fethi" in 1879 (Çetrez, 2009: 1). According to Çetrez, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı "captivated the exotic images of Andalusian Spain in his famous verse *Endülüüs'te Raks (Dance in Andalucía)*" by referring to the modernization in Spain and searched for parallelism between Ottoman and Spanish history (ibid.). He found "the plight of Andalusia in Moorish Spain similar to the disintegrated Ottoman Empire" (Çetrez, 2009: 1).

Throughout the Spanish history, "pilgrims, spies, clergy, slaves, diplomats and the converts" acted as agents for shaping Turkish image. Between 1453 and 1782, there appeared a fierce hostility against the Ottomans accusing them of "brutality and maltreatment towards the Christians under their rule" (Çetrez, 2009: 48). However, there was a proverb on the strength of Turks: "*fuerte como un turco*" (strong like the Turk) (Çetrez, 2009: 48).<sup>4</sup> Zeynep Çetrez reports in her thesis that "many Spanish writers of the 16th and 17th centuries systematically associated the Turks with violence, maltreatment and cruelty" (2009: 48).

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<sup>4</sup> Eloy Martin Corrales, "İspanya-Osmanlı İmparatorluğu İlişkileri 18.-19. Yüzyıllar." İspanya-Türkiye, 16. Yüzyıldan 21. Yüzyıla Rekabet ve Dostluk. İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2006. 235-254.

In the Golden Age in Spain, Turkish image in literary texts, travel books and historical books were generally negative images based on not reliable sources but rumors and storytelling because Turks were considered as other, even barbarian enemies in Christian communities (Lecoq, 2017). Emilio Sola Castaño and Kübra Sarı Lecoq call them as “speculation or class literature” in their article titled “İspanyol Edebiyatı Altın Çağı’nda Türk İmajı ve Duyum Edebiyatı” (“The Turkish Image in Spanish Literature of the Golden Age and the Rumor Literature”). They were tools for political propaganda to create a negative image to rationalize and justify political actions and wars.

The Crimean War and the immigrations affected Turkish image in Latin American cultures. The image of Turks was constructed on barbarity in the travel accounts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Çetrez, 2009: 52).<sup>5</sup>

Though the diplomatic relations started in 1952 between Cuba and Turkey, the first Turkish embassy in Cuba was founded in 1979. Nazmi Akıman was the first ambassador (Akıllı, 2016: 169). During these first relations to 2000s, Turkey did not have a specific policy for trans-continental relations with these countries due to the atmosphere and restrictions of Cold War (Önsoy, 2017: 246). The cultural and political relations with Latin American countries have developed recently. For instance, Turkey joined to the Central America Integration System (SICA) in 2015, which is an organization established by Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, and Belize for climate change, sustainable human development, emergency and risk prevention (Önsoy, 2017: 252). For academic relations, Ankara University established LAMER (The Center of Latin American Studies, Researches and Practices) in 2009 to promote academic studies on Latin America. In 2011, TİKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency) and Havana University signed a protocol. LAMER and Havana University “have been publishing an indexed academic journal entitled *Cuadernos Turquinos* since 2011 to increase awareness of Turkish culture among Cubans” (Önsoy, 2017: 252).

### **3.2. Intercultural Agents and Institutions of “Havana’da Türk Tutkusu 1898” (Turkish Passion in Havana 1898)**

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<sup>5</sup> However, it should be noted that the perspective of Cervantes is quite distinctive compared to these old narrations.

One of the leading institutional agents of intercultural relations between Cuba and Turkey is José Martí Cuba-Turkey Friendship Association. It was founded in 2002 to improve the cooperation and friendship between Turkish and Cuban communities and enhance the social, economic, scientific, professional, cultural and sportive relations between the two countries. It also has an aim to introduce the historical, scientific and artistic values of Cuba to Turkish public. The foundation is at collaboration with The Institute of Cuban Friendship with Publics<sup>6</sup>. The foundation organizes travel tours and professional trips, seminars, film and music festivals and panels.

As an individual agent, Cuban former Ambassador Ernesto Gomez Abascal has been so effective in the intercultural relations. He was born in Havana in 1939 and graduated from Havana University, Institute of Public Administration, Department of Political Sciences<sup>7</sup>. He served as the ambassador of Cuba in Syria, Iraq and Turkey. He especially worked on Arabic and Muslim parties and mutual relations in Cuban Communist Office of Party Foreign Relations (ibid). He was honored with several medals due to his outstanding efforts during American in Iraq when he was Cuban Ambassador in Iraq (ibid). Moreover, Abascal is a journalist, an author writing articles on Middle East and an instructor giving lectures in various educational institutions (ibid). He wrote six books, which were also translated into Turkish namely Havana'da Türk Tutkusu 1898, Kılıçların Şimşegi Altında, Filistin: Adalet Çarmıha mı Gerildi, Bağdat Görevi, Çocuklar İçin Öyküler, Sultan'ın Temsilcisi.

Abascal's book titled Havana'da Türk Tutkusu 1898 (Turkish Passion in Havana 1898) was translated by M. Necati Kutlu and Ceren Karaca with the note "translating from the original in Spanish". The novel was published for the first time in Turkish by Everest Publishing House in 2009 and then published again from NotaBene Publishing House in 2012. The interesting thing about the source text is that it does not exist in a published version because the novel was published in Turkish for the first time. Its author is Ernesto G. Abascal; however, the one who gave the documents constituting the base of the plot is M.N. Kutlu who is seen as one of the translators as well. Thus, Kutlu is like a co-author and translator of the book. Thus, it can be said

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<sup>6</sup> (<http://www.kubadostluk.org/biz-kimiz/>)

<sup>7</sup> (<https://notabene.com.tr/yazarlar/ernesto-gomez-abascal/>)

that the positions of author, translator and the source texts are not the usual ones.

Kutlu was born in Ankara and graduated from a secondary school in Venezuela and Atatürk Anatolian High School and graduated from Ankara University, the department of Spanish Language and Literature. He is a full professor at Ankara University. He is also an author and a translator who translated the books by Eduardo Galeano, Fransisco de Miranda and Jose Saramago. Ceren Karaca is a research assistant in the department of Spanish Language and Literature at Ankara University and she graduated from the same department and finished her M.A. studies there.

Abascal wrote special thanks to the translator in the preface: "to Assoc.Prof.Dr. Necati Kutlu who not only discovered the hero inspiring me for this novel but also enriched the book with his valuable observations and successful translation"<sup>8</sup>. From this sentence, it is clear that Kutlu is not just a translator but an agent. In the preface, it is written that:

"The documents on which this fictional book was based were found, analyzed and published in Spanish as a scientific article by Prof.Dr. Mehmet Necati Kutlu in the Ottoman archive of General Directorate of State Archives of Prime Ministry. The interesting existence of these documents was mentioned in a coffee break between Kutlu and Abascal who was a close friend of Kutlu and Cuban Ambassador in Turkey in that time. Then, this novel was written approximately a year after this conversation." (2009: 5)<sup>9</sup>

The article mentioned is "Küba'da 1898 yılında yaşanan olaylara Bab-1 Ali'nin bakış açısı ve özel temsilcisi Enver Paşa" ("The perspective of Bab-1 Ali to the events in Cuba in 1898 and the special representative Enver Pasha") which was published in the journal named *Revista de Ciencias Sociales de la Region Centrooccidental* in Venezuela in 2006. The hero is Hasan Enver whose

<sup>8</sup> "sadece bu romanıma ilham veren kahramanı keşfetmekle kalmayarak, çok başarılı bir terciüme yapan ve değerli gözlemleriyle eseri zenginleştiren Doç. Dr. Necati Kutlu'ya"

<sup>9</sup> "Bu kurmaca kitaba esas olan belgeler Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi'nde Prof.Dr. Mehmet Necati Kutlu tarafından bulunmuş, incelenmiş ve bilimsel bir makale çerçevesinde yurtdışında İspanyolca olarak yayımlanmıştır. Oldukça ilgi çekici bu belgelerin varlığı, yakın dost olan Kutlu ile o dönemde Türkiye'deki Küba Büyükelçiliği görevini yürüten Abascal'ın bir kahve sohbetine konu olduktan yaklaşık bir yıl sonra da bu roman ortaya çıkmıştır" (5).

father was Konstantin Borzecki who escaped from Polonia and took the name of Mustafa Celaleddin in Ottoman Empire.

As an intercultural agent, academician and instructor Prof. Dr. Mustafa Necati Kutlu is the founder and the current head of the Center of Latin American Studies at Ankara University, Turkey. He is also the founder and division head of Latin American Studies Department in the Institute of Social Sciences at Ankara University. Having founded a department and a center on Latin American Studies, Kutlu is an outstanding intercultural and academic agent fostering the cultural relations between Turkey and Latin American countries. He received "Saint Carlos Chivalry" from Columbia in 2015 and "distinguished professor" award from the Department of Political Sciences and Public Administration Department of Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (The University of San Andrés) in Bolivia in 2016. Kutlu has an award of "Honorary Faculty Member" from Faculty of Law in San Ignacio de Loyola University in Peru in 2017 and an award of honorary doctorate from Universidad Bicentenario de Aragua in Venezuela in 2020. These awards manifest that he has been considered as an impressive intercultural agent and pioneer not only in Turkey but also in these Latin American Studies.

### Conclusion

Translation is a tool of constructing cultural images in various ways and methods. Cultural representations of other countries shape the social cognition of public through historical books, literary works, education, media and other forms of communication. At this crossroads of civilizations and cultures, translation can function as a shaper of social mind. Agents and institutions of translation are the determiners of the process. Latin America and Turkish relations were not very dense before because of geographical, cultural and political distances. However, it has been gaining more importance nowadays to enlarge the global network for governments despite political or ideological differences. Among all countries belonging to Latin American culture; Cuba may be the most distant one due to its communist regime. However, institutions such as José Martí Cuba-Turkey Friendship Association have been trying to build a relationship between cultures despite the differences because they are an isolated country and culture. Ernesto Gomez Abascal and Mustafa Necati Kutlu are agents struggling for strengthening intercultural relations between Latin American and Turkish

public in literary and academic fields. *Havana'da Türk Tutkusu 1898* (*Turkish Passion in Havana 1898*) is a book inspired by its future translator M. Necati Kutlu. As an academician, Kutlu reported his findings to Abascal about Ottoman and Cuban relations. Inspired by this information, Abascal wrote a fiction based on these historical realities. This whole process is a case manifesting the role of translation and its agents in the construction of cultural images and relations.

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"KÜLTÜRLERARASI İLİŞKİLERİN İNŞASINDA BİR ARAÇ  
OLARAK ÇEVİRİ: TÜRK VE KÜBA KÜLTÜRÜ İLİŞKİSİ ÜZERİNE  
BİR ÖRNEK ÇALIŞMA "

Özet

Çeviribilimde kültürel dönemeçle birlikte çevirinin sadece dilsel değil aynı zamanda kültürel bir etkinlik olduğu kabul edilmiştir. Bu kültürel etkinlik çeşitli şekillerde ortaya çıkabilir: kimi zaman farklı kültürler arasında olumlu ve yapıcı etkileşim olarak kimi zaman da aralarında asimetrik güç ilişkileri olan iki kültür arasında asimilasyon, istila ve/ya sömürgeci etkinlik olarak. Edebiyat, çeviri ve çeviri edebiyat bu yelpazedeki çetrefilli ilişkilerde bir araç ya da strateji olarak kullanılabilir. Söz konusu ilişkilerde etkin rol alan eyleyiciler/aktörler Sosyal Bilimler'in her dalında olduğu gibi Çeviribilim'de de inceleme konusu olmuştur. Ernesto Gomez Abascal da bir büyükelçi olarak eyleyici kimliğini de kullanarak İspanyol ve Küba Edebiyatı'nda olumlu bir Türk imgesi oluşturma niyetiyle tarihi gerçeklerden ilham alan kurgu bir roman yazmıştır: Havana'da Türk Tutkusu 1898. Bu kitabı yazma konusunda Abascal'a kitabın gelecekte çevirmeni olacak Mehmet Necati Kutlu ilham vermiştir. Akademisyen ve Türkiye ile Latin Amerika ülkeleri arasındaki ilişkileri geliştiren bir eyleyici olan Kutlu, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Küba ilişkileri hakkında bulduklarını Abascal'a iletmıştır. Bu tarihi verilere dayanarak Abascal kurgu bir roman kaleme almıştır. Bu makale, bu örnek üzerinden edebiyatın, çevirinin ve eyleyicilerin kültürel imge oluşturmadaki rolünü irdelemeye çalışacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Çeviri, kültürel imge, Türk imgesi, Küba Edebiyatı, kültürlerarası ilişkiler.