

# Translational Landscapes From My Country: Nâzım Hikmet in English\*

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## Abstract

The present study delves into the translation of poetry, with a specific focus on the work of Mutlu Konuk and Randy Blasing, who translated Nâzım Hikmet's *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* (1966) as *Human Landscapes From My Country: An Epic Novel in Verse* (1982). Translating poetry is a multifaceted endeavor due to the diverse directions a poem can take in its source language. This often necessitates a trade-off between prioritizing content or form. Nâzım Hikmet's fusion of prose, poetry, regional idioms, and folk sayings presents substantial hurdles for translators. It is precisely here that the present study aligns with Francis Jones' notion of "valency," aiming to convey, or more accurately, recreate the features of the source text within a new language and cultural context. The achievable goal is not a flawless replica, but a correspondence on multiple levels, which forms the foundation for the study's analytical framework.

In essence, this study contributes to the field of translation studies by delving into the intricacies of translating poetry, particularly a work that amalgamates diverse linguistic elements. It highlights the challenges confronted by translators in capturing both the form and content of the source text while accommodating the constraints and nuances of the target language and culture. Through a meticulous analysis of specific excerpts, the study sheds light on the strategies employed by Konuk and Blasing to convey the essence of Nâzım Hikmet's work to an audience unfamiliar with the original language and cultural context.

**Keywords:** Nâzım Hikmet, Turkish Literature, Translation Studies, Poetry, Translation, Style.

## MEMLEKETİMDEN ÇEVİRİ MANZARALARI: İNGİLİZCEDE NÂZIM HİKMET

### Öz

Nâzım Hikmet'in *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* (1966), Mutlu Konuk ile Randy Blasing tarafından İngilizceye *Human Landscapes From My Country: An Epic Novel in Verse* (1982) adıyla çevrilmiştir. Şiir çevirisi, kaynak dildeki şiirin çok yönlülüğünü erek dilde de (yeniden) yaratmak anlamına geldiğinden zor bir iştir. Şiir çevirmeni eninde sonunda içerik ve biçimden birini tercih etmek durumunda kalır. Buna ek olarak, Nâzım Hikmet'in düz yazı, şiir, yörelere özgü deyişler, ve halk dili gibi öğeleri harmanlayarak biçimine yansıtması çevirmenler için durumu daha da zor kılar. Çalışma işte tam da bu noktada Francis Jones'un şiir çevirisinde "değerlik" [valency] kavramından faydalanarak yeni bir dil ve kültür bağlamında kaynak metni meydana getiren değerlik yükü fazla

\* A part of "Translational Landscapes from My Country: Nâzım Hikmet in English" was originally presented at the 2nd International Söylem Philology Symposium held in Didim on October 8th, 2023.

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öğelerin nasıl çevrilebileceği ve/veya yeniden yaratılabileceğini tartışmaktadır. Şiir çevirisinde amaç asla “kusursuz bir kopya” olamaz, şiir çevirmeni farklı öğeler ve düzeyler arasında bilinçli tercihler yaparak yeniden bir bütün meydana getirir.

Çalışma, özellikle çeşitli dil unsurlarını bir araya getiren yüksek “değerlik”li örnekleri saptayıp ayrıntılı olarak inceleyerek hem şiir çevirisine hem de çeviribilimine katkıda bulunmakta, kaynak metnin içerik ve biçimini farklı bir dile aktarırken erek dil ve kültürün kısıtlamalarını dikkate alarak çevirmenlerin karşılaştığı zorlukları vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma böylelikle, özenle seçilen alıntıların çözümlenmesi yoluyla, Mutlu Konuk ve Randy Blasing’in orijinal dil ve kültürel bağlama aşına olmayan bir okuyucu kitlesine Nâzım Hikmet’in eserini aktarmak için kullandığı stratejilere ışık tutmaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Nâzım Hikmet, Türk Edebiyatı, Çeviribilimi, Şiir, Çeviri, Biçem.

## INTRODUCTION

Poetry represents writing in its most compact, condensed and heightened form, in which the language is predominantly connotational rather than denotational and in which content and form are inseparably linked. Poetry is also informed by [...] inner rhythm, regardless of whether there is any formal metre or rhyming pattern, which is one of the most elusive yet essential characteristics of the work that the translator is called upon to translate.

(Connolly, 2001, p. 171)

**T**he difficulty of translating poetry lies in the different directions a poem can go towards in one language. Except for miraculous circumstances, a translated poem cannot go towards the same directions at once. This is in fact a natural outcome of elements that constitute the inner rhythm of a poem. It is highly probable for the translator of a poem to eventually come to the point of choosing one of the directions the source poem goes towards, such as sacrificing content at the expense of form. What is usually meant by the impossibility of translating poetry can in fact be summarized as “[accounting] for all the factors involved and to convey all the features of the original in a language and form acceptable to the language and tradition” (Connolly, 2001, p. 171). If conveying all the characteristics of the source poem, as in many instances, seems not to be possible, the next best thing would be “[making the target poem] correspond to the [source poem] on as many levels as possible” (*ibid.*, 2001, p. 171).

It is from such a perspective that the present study reads *Nâzım Hikmet’s Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* (1966) (MIM) and its translation *Human Landscapes from My Country: An Epic Novel in Verse* (1982) (HL) by Mutlu Konuk and Randy Blasing. Despite his popularity as a poet, Nâzım Hikmet’s style is usually regarded as plain, which makes his oeuvre seem non-challenging from the perspective of translation studies. This might lead to the misconception that translating Nâzım Hikmet’s poetry, or analyzing translations from Nâzım Hikmet might not pose challenges regarding form or there might not be enough examples to comment on. Nevertheless, a closer look at Nâzım Hikmet’s *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* reveals that his style can by no means be defined as plain language: it is a combination of elements of both prose and poetry, also introducing various examples of “regional idioms” and “folk sayings” (Konuk, 2010, p. 2). In MIM, Nâzım Hikmet’s

primary focus revolves around both the content and form (Bulduker, 2020, p. 840). In fact, Nâzım Hikmet personally argues that “there must be balance between content and form” in poetry (*ibid.*, 2020, p. 841). In a similar vein, one of the few studies on the translation of Nâzım Hikmet’s MİM into English also draws on how culture-specific items contribute to the style of Nâzım Hikmet in the source text and what kind of strategies were applied to translate such items (İşi, 2017, p. 4). In what follows, I will carry out an analysis of Mutlu Konuk and Randy Blasing’s translation of MİM with a specific focus on how rhyme and colloquial diction were translated to echo the poet’s style in English. Interestingly enough, the translation of rhyme as a stylistic element in MİM has not been satisfactorily analyzed.<sup>1</sup> Due to the epic’s lengthy nature, the excerpts to be focused on will be from the first section of the first book.

### VALENCY IN TRANSLATION

Francis Jones holds that just like creating poetry, translating poetry entails various strategies applied simultaneously (1989, p. 187). In similar vein, André Lefevere’s frequently applied model based on the seven strategies introduced in his popular book *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blue Print* (1975) is challenged by Jones in that “in the real world”, one hardly comes across merely “phonemic” or “literal” translations (1989, p. 187). Instead, Jones views Lefevere’s “phonemicity,” “literality,” “metricality” or “rhyme” as “strategies operating at individual item level within the framework of larger textual structures” (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 187). It is also underscored that such strategies can hardly be mutually exclusive, i.e. one being absent in the presence of another is regarded by Jones as a rare case (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 187).

Jones’ model can be divided into three stages: “understanding”, “interpretation” and “creation”. The understanding stage is where the translator analyzes the source text. Interpretation is where items to replace those in the source text are determined. Creation entails creating a target text which is, in Gideon Toury’s sense, “acceptable,” as well as, coherent within itself. Both the coherence of the target text within itself and its acceptability are prioritized, and deviating from the source text to that end is deemed possible and indeed necessary, hence the term “creation” (Jones, 1989, p. 188). For the first stage, Jones suggests the translator should take into consideration all the meanings, i.e. “possible ambiguities” and/or “double meanings” presented in the poem (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 188). The next step is to make an analysis to evaluate these individual word-meaning findings within larger units: at phrase, line, image and text levels (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 188). It is important to note that the analyses of such larger units go beyond the semantic level and also include the sound structure of the poem. Moreover, Jones also recommends the translator to rank the features they spotted, e.g. “the sound-structure is absolutely vital, the exact word-meanings less so” (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 190).

Jones holds that the essence of poetry lies in “[avoiding standardized] ways of looking at the world by breaking down [standardized] phrasal and collocational groupings into their individual components” (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 190). It is maintained that the use of lowerranked items such as “individual words or even morphemes” contributes a great deal to that. It is further asserted that

<sup>1</sup> For a scholarly work commenting on the translation of rhyme in MİM, see Uysal-Gliniecki, 2020, pp. 17, 69, 173.

although the use of such lowerranked items can also be of great importance to prose, the main difference between prose and poetry can be regarded as the extent to which such items relate to one another in the latter (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 190). Borrowing a term from the field of chemistry, Jones refers to the features of each item as their “valent features,” in other words, their “valency” (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 190). Valent features are, including but not limited to, a particular item’s “literal meaning, associative meaning, etymological meaning, pragmatic meaning; its concrete or metaphorical role in the image; its typical collocations and its actual collocations in this text; repetitions elsewhere in the text; style, register; soundquality/length; syntactic function, morphological form”, in other words, any function/all functions a given item might serve within the poem at the same time (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 190). It is also noted that since textual networks, i.e. the totality of relations among items of similar or different rank, might have been formed intentionally or unintentionally by the poet, the ranking of these by the translator needs to be carried out in the light of how the translator perceives them (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 190). In other words, the translator will need to decide which items to choose to echo in the target text.

Valency, according to Jones, can be recreated via different methods. One of these methods is what he calls “transference,” which can be described as finding a one-to-one equivalent for a given item in the ST (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 190). In determining the valent features of a given item, the translator needs to take into account the role of the item within the source poem (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 190), i.e. the word “ay” in Turkish can both mean moon and an exclamation mark, but if one of these meanings does not seem to make sense in a given poem, the translator working into English can ignore the linguistic valency of the item and just focus on the text-based valency thereof. It is by all means possible to have “zero-valency”, that is, if an item just serves one function and is not a part of any phonemic or semantic textual network, it can be “transferred” without losing valency (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 190). If an item is not transferable, on the other hand, a feature or more than a feature of an item will have to be abandoned (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 194). “Abandonment” results in a decrease in the number of valent features of an ST item (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 194). Although the translator of poetry, ideally, has always in mind “constructing equivalent networks of textual features in the target language”, such equivalence might not always be possible, and an increase in the number of the items and/or features abandoned, results in a target text with little or even no similarity to the source text (*ibid.*, 1989, p. 195).

The frequency of “abandonment” in translated poetry in Jones’ sense, I would like to argue, might also be observed as an outcome of the inclination to turn the unfamiliar into the familiar (Tymoczko, 1999, p. 50). Translators have such a tendency to do so when they believe their (target) readership might be interested in their work more if they feel as familiar to it as possible. So, in theory, the drive for “abandonment” not only stems from the inability to maintain “valency”, but also the deliberate or indeliberate intention to increase familiarity. In fact, such abandonment for the sake of familiarization can be observed not only in the “omissions” translators make, but also in their “additions” (Toury, 2000, p. 202). I believe, both forms of abandonment in this sense decrease the similarity of the translation to the source text, resulting in a loss of the poet’s individual style as well as the culture-specificity of their work, in other words, *what the target readership is not familiar with*. It is at this very point that the notion of “glocalization” might be useful for a deeper

understanding of the target text in English. For this very case, it can be described not as the migration of the global into a locality, but the migration of the local into the globality (Roudometof, 2016, p. 399). Still, the decrease in valency, observed in the form of additions and omissions -two different forms of abandonment- cannot move the English target text entirely away from the Turkish source text. Therefore, it is still not entirely global, but glocal. In most cases, the local aspects are still there, but transformed and reduced for the sake of familiarity with the target readership.

Despite the fact that - as should have been clear so far - Jones' model based on valency is not devised as one to analyze existing translations but to translate a poem from one language into another, it furnishes any given reader, including a translator or a translation critic, with a perspective to discover the totality of relations among items with higher degrees of valency. This is the very reason why, having modified and expanded the purpose for which Jones devised his model, I set out to analyze the first part of the book in the light of the concept of valency in the next section below.

### ANALYSIS: VALENCY AS RHYME AND COLLOQUIAL DICTION

Nâzım invented a new language in prison. His epic, *Human Landscapes from My Country*, written in Bursa Prison, hosts the life stories of his fellow inmates and a variety of other stories, regional idioms and folk sayings he heard from the prisoners. He takes the measure of these various materials and the ongoing "live" talk among diverse characters in his poetic lines [...]

(Konuk 2010, p. 2)

Here, Mutlu Konuk underscores the role Nâzım Hikmet's incarceration played in constituting his material for *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları*. Inspired by "life stories" of those he met in prison, Nâzım Hikmet "invented" a new language, in other words, a new style.<sup>2</sup> Such a style also feeds on "regional idioms" and "folk sayings", i.e. the way the inmates tell about their life stories is their own way. Mutlu Konuk also underscores Nâzım Hikmet's introducing colloquial diction into poetry elsewhere (2002, XIII). Influenced by the language which does not belong to the city dweller but to those who come from different parts and/or social classes of his homecountry, Nâzım Hikmet reflects the "live talk" of the people with different backgrounds who all ended up in prison. What Konuk refers to as "live talk", then, is probably the transparency of Nâzım Hikmet in transmitting the way his inmates speak to each other and, without doubt, to him. But is he hundred percent transparent? How does Nâzım Hikmet base his revolutionary form on colloquial diction? What makes his style distinct?

One of the main features of Nâzım Hikmet's style can be regarded as his subtle application of rhyme in his poems. The way he applies rhyme is so intermittent that it is difficult to spot the rhyming lines at first sight. MIM is also replete with examples of such use of rhyme. This is a work where Nâzım Hikmet gives examples of colloquial speech; nevertheless, it is a well known fact that no ordinary people would use rhyme frequently in speech; therefore, it would not be mere exaggeration to say that rhyme contributes a great deal to the form Nâzım Hikmet gives to

<sup>2</sup> See Mıgđıs Şeker and Demirel, 2020 for further reading on how Nâzım Hikmet's life in prison and exile transformed his oeuvre. For a discussion on the image of Hikmet in Anglo-American literary systems, see Ergil 2008.

colloquialisms, separating them from their everyday usage and bringing them into the realm of poetry. Below is such an example:

Excerpt I

“Evlenseydim eğer  
Torunum olurdu bu kadar”  
diye düşündü  
“çalışırdı, bana bakar”  
diye düşündü.<sup>3</sup>  
(Hikmet, 1966, p. 14)

and thinks:  
“If I’d married,  
I’d have a granddaughter her age.”  
He thinks:  
“She could work and look after me.”  
(Hikmet, 1982, p. 7)

In the source text, “Bu kadar” and “bakar” are in a formal relation to each other in MIM. In Jones’ sense, the valent features of the two items can be enumerated as follows: “kadar” means “this big” and/or “at this age” at the semantic level and rhymes with “bakar” at the phonemic level. The repetition of “a” in “kadar” and “bakar” also creates assonance. At the semantic level, “bakar” refers to taking care of someone, while it rhymes with “kadar” at the phonemic level.

In the target text, “bu kadar” is translated as referring to the age of the girl and “bakar” as “take care”, which altogether transfer the semantic level. Nonetheless, the ultimate words of the lines are “age” and “me”, which do not rhyme with each other. In other words, because the translators seem to have had no choice other than sacrificing rhyme at the expense of content, valency is not achieved.

Excerpt II

Merdivenlerde güneş  
yorgunluk  
ve telaş  
ve bir altın başlı kelebek ölüsü var.<sup>4</sup>  
(Hikmet, 1966, p. 15)

On the steps, sun  
fatigue  
and confusion –  
plus a dead yellow butterfly.  
(Hikmet, 1982, p. 7)

The repetition of the “sh” phoneme in “güneş,” “telaş,” and “baş” adds to the poem a musical aspect. From the perspective of valency, “güneş” stands both for the sun at the semantic level and rhyme at the phonemic level; “telaş”, for hurry on the semantic level and rhyme on the phonemic level, and “baş” for head at the semantic level and rhyme at the phonemic level, as well. In HL, the recurring “n” sound can be observed at the ultimate letter of the words “sun” and “confusion”, which rhyme with each other. Therefore, valency of these words at the phonemic level is achieved. However, the alliteration in the last line of the excerpt has no counterpart in the target text. Moving

<sup>3</sup> Back Translation:

“If I had married,  
I would have had a grandson,”  
he thought.  
“He would work, take care of me,”  
he thought.

<sup>4</sup> On the stairs,  
there is fatigue,  
and haste,  
and a dead butterfly with a golden head.

on to the semantic level, it can be observed that “güneş” and “yorgunluk” have been transferred directly, while “telaş” has apparently been translated as “confusion”, which could have been more directly translated as hurry or panic. The reason for having made such a decision is most probably maintaining the rhyme in the source text with the ultimate word of the excerpt above. What cannot be explained so easily, though, is why the noun phrase “altın başlı kelebek ölüsü” (the dead butterfly with a head of gold) seems to have been reduced to “a dead yellow butterfly”. In other words, baş (head) is omitted from the TT. What’s more, in the ST the underscored word is “ölüsü” – a butterfly body rather than a dead butterfly. This could also be interpreted as a change in perspective. In other words, the shiny golden head of the butterfly corpse, which could be regarded as a striking image in MIM, is lost in HL \*\*\*, i.e. the golden image Nâzım draws in MIM is turned into a yellow one (without a head) in HL.

## Excerpt III

Ve her ne kadar  
Bir daha görülmeyecekse de  
Hayal meyal  
Karanlık bir yerlerde hatırlanan kadın  
çocuk Kemal  
yapayalnız değil artık  
ortasında kâinatın.<sup>5</sup>  
(Hikmet, 1966, p. 16)

And though  
He’ll never again see  
The shadowy woman  
He dimly remembers,  
The child Kemal  
is no longer alone  
in the world.  
(Hikmet, 1982, p. 7)

The child Kemal is a child being taken to the police station. Here, Advıye saves him from being arrested. It is difficult to grasp why Konuk and Blasing decided to use “world” (dünya) instead of “universe” (kâinat, evren). Without doubt, the latter would have been a literal translation, while the former results in a change in meaning. Such a semantic change has an effect on the formal level as well. Just as “kadın” and “kâinatın” rhyme with each other, so could have “remembers” and “universe” if Konuk and Blasing had not changed the meaning of “universe” into “world”. In other words, this excerpt can be seen as an example of a piece of poetry translation where both form and content could have been “faithfully” translated simultaneously. Examples regarding the application of rhyme can be multiplied:

## Excerpt IV

Bugüne dek  
Farkına varmadan biriken şeyler  
Yığınla  
Üst üste  
Hep beraber

Things that have built inside him unknown  
Until this moment  
Rush  
Together  
In torrents

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<sup>5</sup> Back Translation:

And although  
Even if she will never be seen again,  
Vaguely  
The woman remembered in a dark place,  
child Kemal  
is not alone anymore  
in the middle of the universe.

Tıkacını atan bir çeşme suyu gibi	Like water bursting from a capped spring
Bulanık	-muddy,
Berrak	Clear-
Akıyordu kafasının içini doldurarak: <sup>6</sup>	Flooding his head:
(Hikmet, 1966, p. 18)	(Hikmet, 1982, p. 9)

This excerpt is from the part where Galip Usta goes through a sudden enlightenment: there are too many plants in Istanbul, in Turkey and in the world. The part tells about workers getting killed or injured in these factories, about the unemployed, who cannot even afford their subsistence needs. The semantic structure of the ST is slightly modified in the TT: “until this moment” for “bugüne dek,” “rush” for “yığınla,” “tıkacını atan bir çeşme suyu gibi” for “like water bursting from a capped spring”. For the first two, “until today,” “in piles” could have been more literal; nevertheless, this must be the outcome of the translators’ desire to create a TT which reads like a poem in the target language. Such a motive for making the TT *more familiar* can also be observed in the way the translators spelled Turkish proper names. This makes it easier for the target readership to pronounce them. Such examples would be spelling Süleyman as Suleiman (Hikmet, 1982, p. 8), Adviye as Adviyé (*ibid.*, p. 7), Ömer as Omer (*ibid.*, p. 10), Recep as Rejep (*ibid.*, p. 10), Kadıköy as Kadikoy (*ibid.*, p. 12), Dolmabahçe as Dolmabatché (*ibid.*, p. 12), Kalpakçılar as Kalpakchilar (*ibid.*, p. 12) and Haydarpaşa as Haydar Pasha (*ibid.*, p. 13).

Focusing on the valent features in the ST above can make it easier to understand that rhyme is once more in the forefront. The part where Nâzım Hikmet announces the “things that have built inside [Galip Usta] unknown until [that] moment” is much more dramatic and striking with rhyme: “bulanık / berrak / akıyordu kafasının içini doldurarak”. Then comes the part where Galip’s so-far-undiscovered thoughts are revealed. Such a critical moment in the source text, then, can be argued to be a part with valency, both in terms of content and form. As can be seen above, in the TT, the latter is not rendered: “muddy / clear / flooding his head”. To render the same, among an endless number of alternatives, the first one crossing the mind could be merely changing the syntax of the last line: “his head, flooding” instead of “flooding his head”. This would not be possible, though, without taking into account the line before “muddy”: “Like water bursting from a capped spring”. Then, instead of the last three lines, lines 6 and 9 could rhyme with each other. The meaning would have changed, e.g. a flooding head, nevertheless, benefiting from poetic licence, the translators could have kept the valency, at least to some extent. The following is an example where they have in fact done so:

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<sup>6</sup> Back Translation:

Up until today,  
 Things accumulated without realizing,  
 A heap,  
 Piled on top,  
 All together,  
 Like a fountain that releases its plug,  
 Flowing,  
 Muddled,  
 Clear,  
 Filling her mind.

## Excerpt V

[...]Kim bilir dünyada ne kadar  
Ne kadar çok işsiz var.  
Ama askere almışlardır.  
Asker olunca işsiz adam  
Artık işsiz sayılmaz mı?"  
"-Yine derinlere daldın ustam."<sup>7</sup>  
(Hikmet, 1966, p. 19)

[...]Who knows how many in the world,  
How many are out of work?  
But maybe they're in the army.  
When a man is in the army,  
Doesn't he count as unemployed?"  
"-You're getting deep again, Galip."  
(Hikmet, 1982, p. 10)

In this excerpt, the reader is again faced with another one of Galip Usta's so-far-unrevealed thoughts: the number of the unemployed in the world cannot be guessed. And if someone unemployed joins the army, is he still considered as such? The first example of rhyme in the excerpt is "kim bilir dünyada ne kadar / ne kadar çok işsiz var". Similarly, the application of rhyme to express such a critical question makes it even more effective. Repetition, another device applied by Nâzım Hikmet also serves the same function: "kim bilir dünyada *ne kadar / ne kadar çok işsiz var*." The meaning, rhyme and repetition strike the source readership all at once. The TT, this time, has all these valent features the ST has: "who knows how many in the world / how many are out of work?". In addition to the semantic level, both rhyme and repetition can be observed in the TT. The former includes all but the ultimate letters of the last words of the lines ("world" and "work") and, with regards to the latter, the keyword "how many" is repeated. In short, all the valent features present in the first two lines of the excerpt have been transferred into the TT.

Another example of rhyme in the excerpt is "asker olunca işsiz adam / artık işsiz sayılmaz mı / '-yine derinlere daldın ustam'". While the first two lines here are the thoughts of Galip Usta again, the last one is an utterance by Fuat, who is under arrest. While the reader is in the mind of Galip Usta, immersed in his thoughts, both Galip Usta and the readership are suddenly awakened by Fuat. The way Fuat addresses Galip Usta - "ustam" - rhymes with Galip Usta's thoughts: "asker olunca adam". Such a rhyme by two different speakers on two different cognitive levels, e.g. mind level and speech level, is both surprising and mysterious. Without knowing what Galip Usta is thinking about, Fuat manages to make an utterance which happens to rhyme with Galip Usta's thoughts. Does he know what he is thinking about? Might he have guessed? Is Fuat pointing at his own hopelessness in saving the country, most probably from imperialism? Is he, in a way, recommending Galip Usta to purge his mind off such fruitless thoughts – for he is now a prisoner because of them? Is Fuat, who has committed a crime - reading a book with two others! -, making fun of the situation of his country and the world in a way which can potentially get the reader – and Galip Usta – to ask such questions?

Despite being a foregrounded valent feature, rhyme cannot be observed in the TT: "when a man is in the army / doesn't he count as unemployed? / You're getting deep again, Galip". No rhymic

<sup>7</sup> Back Translation:

[...] Who knows how many  
How many unemployed there are in the world.  
But they must have been enlisted.  
When you become a soldier,  
Is a man still considered unemployed?"  
"-Once again, you've delved into the depths, master."

relation can be established between the ultimate word of the last line and “army”, which can be evaluated as loss in valency. In fact, what cannot be observed in this example in the TT is not only the rhyme, but also the word itself: “ustam”. Therefore, here, there is a loss in valency both in terms of content and form. Furthermore, there is one more important valent feature lost, which can be analyzed from the perspective of what Konuk refers to as “colloquial diction.”

The word “usta” in MIM is critical. The first character the readership encounters in the source text is a worker, in other words, an *usta*. Usta has another connotation in the Turkish language, which is, an informal, in other words, colloquial way of addressing another man, just like the English words “lad, mate, bro, or boss”. The way people, e.g. prisoners or workers, address each other in MIM is critical in forming the style of Hikmet because as Konuk herself rightfully argues elsewhere, “[...] serving time in prison served [Nâzım Hikmet] and [...] reshaped [his] poetry” (2010, p. 3). Such reshaping is a combination of content and form, and a salient portion of the latter is constituted by the way people addressed each other. An example for such colloquial address is the reader’s first encounter with Galip Usta on the first page of MIM, which can be deemed crucial in perceiving the valency of the word:

Excerpt VI

Haydarpaşa garında

1941 baharında

saat on beş

Merdivenlerin üstünde güneş

Yorgunluk

ve telaş.

Bir adam

merdivenlerde duruyor

bir şeyler düşünerek.

Zayıf.

Korkak.

Burnu sivri ve uzun

yanaklarının üstü çopur.

Merdivenlerdeki adam

– Galip Usta –

tuhaf şeyler düşünmekle meşhurdur:<sup>8</sup>

Haydar Pasha Station,

spring 1941,

3 p.m.

At the top of the steps, sun

fatigue

and confusion.

A man

Stops on the steps,

thinking.

Thin.

Scared.

His nose is long and pointed,

And his cheeks are pockmarked.

The man on the steps

– The master worker Galip –

is famous for thinking strange things:

<sup>8</sup> Back Translation:

At Haydarpaşa station,

In the spring of 1941,

at three o'clock.

On the stairs, the sun

Fatigue

and haste.

A man

is standing on the stairs,

thinking about something.

Frail.

Timid.

His nose is sharp and long,

dirt on his cheeks.

The man on the stairs

Galip Usta -

(Hikmet, 1966, p. 11)

(Hikmet, 1982, p. 3)

Having furnished the reader with a description of Haydarpaşa Train Station, the interlude introduces to the reader a laborer: Galip. He is thin and cowardly. Then, the reader learns about what differentiates Galip from other laborers: “[he] is famous for thinking strange things.” He questions life, justice, equality, and most probably, the system in which some get to possess far more than they need, while the others, far less than necessary to subsist. Galip’s being an “usta,” in other words, his being a laborer plays a critical role in that, for Galip symbolizes the lowest rank in the hierarchy, a fact underscored by Nâzım Hikmet wherever Galip is mentioned: “Galip Usta baktı Âtifete” (Hikmet, 2002, p. 14), “Kelepçeli Fuat seslendi Galip Ustaya” (Hikmet, 2002, p. 17), “-Usta, yine tuhaf şeyler düşünüyorsun” (Hikmet, 2002, p. 18), “Eyvallah usta / düşünmek değiştirmez hayatı” (Hikmet, 2002, p. 18), “Galip Usta / bu sefer / dehşetli bir şeyler düşünerek / bakıyor kelepçesine Fuat’ın” (Hikmet, 2002, p. 18), “Galip Usta pulanyacıydı” (Hikmet, 2002, p. 19), “Galip Usta dokundu Fuat’ın kelepçesine” (Hikmet, 2002, p. 19), “Ustanın çipil gözleri ıslak / titriyor uzun burnu” (Hikmet, 2002, p. 19), “Galip Usta selametleyip mahkûmları / girdi üçüncü mevki bekleme salonuna” (Hikmet, 2002, p. 24), “Galip Usta ne dost ne düşmandı Hitler’e” (Hikmet, 2002, p. 24).

Some of these examples do not include the proper name “Galip” but the title “Usta” only. This might have stemmed from the poet’s desire to foreground the fact that Galip is a laborer, in other words, the social class he belongs to. He is an *usta*, representing workers like him: Nâzım Hikmet aims to portray the people of his country using the most representative types (Aguilar, p. 2007, p. 108). In fact, Galip Usta is specifically constructed with a detailed image system to represent the working class and its issues (Özer, 2013, p. 66). “Hikmet hence employs folk realism to create not memorable characters but memorable types of simple men” (Dolcerocca, 2016, p. 113) The fact that a laborer contemplates all the injustice, hunger and death can be regarded as being of utmost importance to the semantic level of the poem, hence the frequent use of the title by the source poet. Here are the examples about Galip Usta from the TT: “Galip / looks at Atifet / and thinks” (Hikmet, 1982, p. 5), “Galip / what strange things are you thinking now?” (Hikmet, 1982, p. 8), “Staring at Fuat’s handcuffs / Galip / suddenly / has a frightening thought” (Hikmet, 1982, p. 9), “Galip was a planer” (Hikmet, 1982, p. 9), “You’re getting deep again, Galip” (Hikmet, 1982, p. 10), “Galip touched Fuat’s handcuffs” (Hikmet, 1982, p. 10), “Galip’s bleary eyes were moist” (Hikmet, 1982, p. 10), “Galip saw the prisoners off” (Hikmet, 1982, p. 13), “Galip neither liked nor disliked Hitler” (Hikmet, 1982, p. 14). The TT does not include any equivalent for the word “usta,” and except for the part Galip Usta is introduced to the reader for the first time, no way of address is applied except for the proper name Galip. In other words, the implied message “Galip is a worker” in the ST can be said to have been transferred to the TT as “Galip is a character,” in other words, the valency is reduced: A colloquial way of address, which is very vital to MIM - for the reasons depicted above - cannot be found in the TT.

Another example of the translation of colloquial address, which might not be as critical as that of “usta” though, is “polis efendi” (Hikmet, 1966, p. 16). *Polis efendi* is the way people in the epic and

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is famous for thinking strange things:

people on the street address a policeman. "Efendi" literally translates "master". When the power of the government, and as a result, that of the police, in that period are taken into consideration, the connotation the people depicted in the epic attribute to a policeman gains more valency. This very word is translated into the TT as "policeman" (Hikmet, 1982, p. 7), resulting in a loss in valency both in colloquial diction and in meaning.

Another valency in colloquial diction is as follows: "Merdivenlerin üstünde bir kayısı gülü /bir cıgara paketi" (Hikmet, 1966, p. 19). Here is the same part from HL: "On the steps, an apricot rose / a cigarette package" (Hikmet, 1982, p. 7). "Cıgara" by all means cigarette; however, instead of "cıgara," Nâzım Hikmet could have well used "sigara," which is the standardized way of saying it. A more standardized way, by all means, means less colloquial; therefore, local. Given Konuk's awareness of Nâzım Hikmet's application of colloquial diction – discussed and quoted above – it is difficult to grasp why the translators might not have opted for the less standardized and thus colloquial solutions such as "butt", "fag", or "smoke".

The final example on colloquial diction is about the translation of an idiom. This is from the part where the other prisoner, Süleyman sees two ladies and dreams of a young girl. When "Suleiman [sees] the ladies" in the TT, "he [pictures] a young woman" (Hikmet, 1982, p. 8). In other words, "thinks of a young woman". Nevertheless, in the ST, what Süleyman does is more than merely picturing a young woman. This very part is critical in that a prisoner such as Süleyman – "handcuffed Süleyman" – is apparently dreaming of courting a young woman: a common desire for most prisoners. The parallel line in the ST "Genç bir kadın geçirdi yüreğinden" is much stronger in that sense (Hikmet, 1966, p. 17). "Yüreğinden geçirmek" is not exactly "to picture", but "to desire". Turning such a desire into "picture" decreases the valency of the content in that sense, and furthermore, given the fact that the poet speaks on behalf of Süleyman using Süleyman's diction, turning "to desire" into "to picture" standardizes the feelings of a prisoner which Süleyman expresses in a colloquial way. In short, "picture" reduces the colloquial effect of "yüreğinden geçirmek" both in terms of valency of content and form.

## CONCLUSION

Nâzım Hikmet himself points out that "[MIM] has elements of poetry and sometimes even *technical stuff like rhymes, etc.*" (cited in Konuk, 1982, p. XIV, *emphasis mine*). Rhyme, as analysis shows, is not maintained in Excerpts I and II. In Excerpt III, the unnecessary replacement of the word "kainat" (universe) with "world" (dünya) results in a loss of valency both on the semantic and phonemic levels. In Excerpt IV, rhyme as a valent feature is not present in the TT. Excerpt V is an example of echoing rhyme in that world and work have in common the letters w,o and r, and the translators can said to have succeeded in rendering the valency of rhyme in the TT. However, the rhyme between "adam" and "ustam", or other alternative rhyming words cannot be observed in the TT. This example is also critical on the grounds that the word "usta" within the context of MIM is both an example of rhyme and colloquial diction. The absence of a word with such valent features is strongly felt in the target text. Other examples of valency regarding colloquial diction are "efendi," "cıgara," and "yüreğinden geçirmek." As discussed above, Konuk herself acknowledges the fact that the application of colloquial diction, in other words, using the language of people from lower

classes plays a key role in Nâzım Hikmet's style. Given such a context, say, translating "cıgara" as "sigara" results in a standardized use of language. While Nâzım speaks the language of the people, the translators speak the language of city dwellers. To put it in Jones' terms, the valency of the word "cıgara" is not regarded as critical to the theme of the source text and translated accordingly.

Translation is rewriting. In most cases, the TT can be replete with items that cannot be recreated in the ST. I definitely acknowledge the fact that with regards to literature, translator is a writer. Nevertheless, especially the case of "usta" in MIM and HL is of utmost importance to the understanding and interpreting of MIM, which results in a loss of valency in the target text. All in all, the 1982 translation by Mutlu Konuk and Randy Blasing of the first part of MIM, Book I, can be evaluated as innovative on the grounds that it has served the function of its introduction into the English repertoire; nevertheless, today, a retranslation, especially focused on the language of the people/characters, could provide the potential readership with a less standardized/global and more g/local language style, which plays a key role in understanding Nâzım Hikmet, and, without doubt making him understood in more detail by the target culture. Nâzım Hikmet himself argues: "[a poet] has to have something to say [...] and this thing has to be worth saying, and then it has to be cast into *the most suitable, most perfect mold*" (Kurdakul, 1987, p. 40, cited in Konuk, 2010, p. 17, *emphasis mine*). To cast MIM into a more suitable mold, it might be worthwhile to put in more effort regarding the valency of rhyme and colloquial diction.

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FEMİNİST EDEBİYAT KURAMI BAĞLAMINDA

# GÜLTEN AKIN ŞİİRİ

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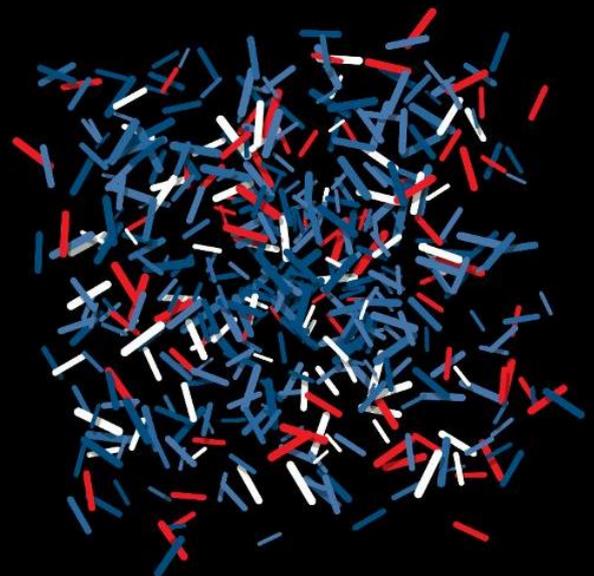


  
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KARŞITSAL VE DAĞILIMSAL BİR ÇÖZÜMLEME

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