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"I was subjected to cringe translation": Digital Social Reading and the Reception of Translated Young Adult Fantasy Fiction

"Cringe çeviriye maruz kaldım": Dijital Sosyal Okuma ve Çeviri Genç Yetişkin Fantastik Edebiyatının Alımlanması

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ABSTRACT

As digital technologies continue to expand, it becomes increasingly important to explore the evolving relationship between participatory culture and translated literary works. On digital social reading platforms like Goodreads, readers play a significant role in the reception of translated literature and engagement with literature from diverse cultural backgrounds. Digital social reading platforms, like other social media, are frequently used by young people. Therefore, this study delves into the reception of the Turkish translation of the popular young adult fantasy fiction series *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Maas, a work that offers insights into the emotional journeys of young adults within the realm of fantasy. To this end, an inductive content analysis has been carried out on the Turkish Goodreads comments on the first three books of the series. Following the analysis, it was found that while the reception of Turkish readers is similar to the general ratings, there are some discrepancies. Also, social media posts constitute a factor in the reader reception as they contain spoilers, distorting the expectations of readers. Furthermore, the characteristics of the genre can have a negative impact due to the disparities between the source and target cultures.

Keywords: *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, digital social reading, Goodreads, reception, Sarah J. Maas, young adult fantasy fiction.

ÖZ

Dijital teknolojilerin yaygınlaşmasıyla, katılımcı kültür ile çeviri edebiyat eserleri arasındaki ilişkiyi keşfetmek giderek daha önemli hale gelmiştir. Goodreads gibi dijital sosyal okuma platformlarında okurlar, çeviri edebiyatın alımlanmasında ve farklı kültürel geçmişlerden gelen eserlerle etkileşimde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Dijital sosyal okuma platformları, diğer sosyal medya araçları gibi, gençler tarafından sıklıkla kullanılmaktadır. Bu çalışma, genç yetişkinlerin fantezi dünyasındaki duygusal yolculuklarına dair içgörüler sunan Sarah J. Maas'ın popüler genç yetişkin fantastik kurgu serisi *Dikenler ve Güller Sarayı*'nın Türkiye'deki alımlanmasını ele almaktadır. Bu amaçla, serinin ilk üç kitabına ilişkin Türkçe Goodreads yorumları üzerinde tümevarımsal bir içerik analizi gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, Türk okuyucu alımlamasının serinin platformdaki genel puanlamasına benzerlik göstermekle birlikte bazı farklılıklar olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca, sosyal medya paylaşımları spoiler içerdiğinden okuyucuların beklentilerini çarpıtarak okuyucu alımlamasında bir faktör oluşturmaktadır. Türün özellikleri, kaynak ve erek kültürler arasındaki farklılıklar nedeniyle alımlama üzerinde olumsuz bir etkiye sahip olabilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Dikenler ve Güller Sarayı*, dijital sosyal okuma, Goodreads, alımlama, Sarah J. Maas, genç yetişkin fantastik edebiyatı.

1. Introduction

In the age of digital social reading, the once-private act of reading literature has transformed into a collaborative and socially influenced endeavor. Platforms like Goodreads constitute vital affinity spaces where readers not only share opinions but also influence book sales, author decisions, and promotional strategies. Literary reception is readers' interpretation of a literary work based on their cultural background and norms (D'Egidio, 2015; Gambier, 2018; Holub, 1984; Sayın, 1999). The concept of reception theory in literary studies was first introduced by German philosopher Hans Robert Jauss in the late 1960s. Jauss used the term "horizon of expectation" to describe the criteria readers use to evaluate literary texts during a particular period (1970, p. 13). According to Robert C. Holub (1984, p. 45), reception theory focuses on the relationship between the text and the reader, rather than the author and the work. It emphasizes the reader's interpretation of the text as the key factor in the literary experience, characterizing literature as an interaction between the reader and the text. In other words, reception theory highlights the crucial role of the reader in the process of understanding a literary work.

A similar shift has occurred in Translation Studies (TS) in which the focus shifted from text to actors involved in the entire translation process (Toury, 2012; Yurtdaş, 2010). Among these actors are source text authors, translators, and of course, recipients. As Gambier stated, "since Nida's ground-breaking work in signaling the pivotal role of recipients in interlingual communications, reception has become a more relevant dimension in TS, even though such studies are still scarce" (Gambier, 2018, p. 49).

The understudied field of translation reception has gained some impetus in recent years with the growing popularity of audiovisual translation (AVT) and audience reception studies (Abdal & Yaman, 2023; Baş, 2019; Gambier, 2018; Okyayuz, 2021). Cognitive approaches to reader/audience reception have led to empirical results, providing impetus for process research (Walker, 2021; Kruger et al. 2013; Alves and Hurtado Albir, 2017; Muñoz Martín, 2017). Some researchers made use of the data from online reading platforms to evaluate the actual reader response to translated literature (Cadera & Walsh, 2022; Chan, 2010; Chen, 2023; Işıklar Koçak, 2017; Kotze et al., 2021; Tahir Gürçağlar, 2022; Zheng & Fan, 2023). AI-assisted corpus studies on readers' comments to analyze reception is another innovative method currently in the literature (Boot, 2023; Holur et al., 2021; Kotze et al., 2021; Milota, 2014; Tahir Gürçağlar, 2022)

This study aims to analyze reader reception of translated young adult (YA) fantasy fiction. Specifically, the research will focus on the impact of digital social reading platforms on young readers aged between 15 and 24, who have the highest reading rates in Turkey. The Turkish translation of first three volumes of the highly rated *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (ACOTAR) series by Sarah J. Maas have been selected for this purpose. The series is significant in bridging imagination and real-life experiences within the young adult fantasy genre, which has sparked a wealth of social media content, enhancing the author's popularity. The dataset of this study is obtained from the monolingual and bilingual comments of lay readers on Goodreads. Within the context of this study, the Goodreads "users" or "reviewers" will also be called "Goodreaders". The reason for selecting this particular genre, audience, and corpus is due to the fact that this series has sparked numerous discussions and diverse opinions among young adult readers on digital social platforms. These readers also represent the largest group of book enthusiasts in the Turkish population.

The research questions of this study are as follows:

- *How do Turkish readers on Goodreads receive young adult fantasy fiction?*
- *How aware are Turkish readers of the translators or the translation processes?*
- *How does digital social reading affect the reception of young adult fantasy fiction?*

2. Young Adult Fantasy and Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (ACOTAR)

The genre of young adult fantasy is a captivating exploration of adolescent sensibilities and fantastical narratives. A quintessential exemplar within this realm is Sarah J. Maas's "A Court of Thorns and Roses" (ACOTAR) series (Maas, 2015; 2016; 2017), which intricately navigates the tapestry of youth's transformative journey, encapsulating themes of self-discovery, empowerment, and love against the backdrop of a richly realized fantasy world. This story weaves together elemental magic and mythical creatures, as the young protagonist Feyre embarks on dangerous quests to grapple with her identity, resilience, and the complexities of morality (Little & Moruzi, 2021). By using fantastical elements to explore universal themes, the series immerses young adult readers in a resonant universe that reflects their growing understanding of self and society (Jorgensen, 2021). Therefore, the details of the plot and the relationship among the main characters can shed light on the readers' motivation for choosing sides and expressing their opinions via digital social reading platforms.

The first book of the series titled "A Court of Thorns and Roses" (2015) begins with Feyre's hunting expedition

gone wrong when she kills a fey wolf with "hatred in her heart" (p. 26). The lord of the victim, the High Lord of the Autumn Court, Tamlin appears in Feyre's family home in the form of a beast and takes Feyre to his estates in exchange for her punishment, i.e. death or slavery. After years of hunger and struggle to keep her two elder sisters and father alive by hunting, Feyre finds kindness and a lot of spare time in her hands, which is not challenged by the High Lord or his underlings. As she realizes the whole Court of Autumn is under a terrible curse caused by a former general of the enemy king, Amarantha, she feels for the kind High Lord and his subjects with all her heart. Eventually, Feyre falls in love with Tamlin in a selfless sense, and Tamlin loves Feyre in a possessive, destructive sense, as is his nature. Until this moment, the book reads as a retelling of Beauty and the Beast, but Maas extends her world and characters and turns this classic fairy tale story into an epic fantasy phenomenon.

When Amarantha's ally and captive the High Lord of Night Court, Rhysand finds out Tamlin hosts a human female, Tamlin panics and sends Feyre back to her family. However, Feyre, being in love and a very courageous young woman, goes back and finds that Amarantha has taken Tamlin captive. Then, she decides to save him by going to "Under the Mountain" where Amarantha holds her vicious and nightmarish court. Here she becomes subjected to all kinds of terrors, torture, and humiliation and still agrees to complete three challenges to lift the curse of her beloved. As she struggles with all these, she finds she is not alone, as for unknown reasons Rhysand helps her in exchange for a bargain: She must spend one week every month in his court.

Finally, Feyre, with Rhysand's help, wins all three challenges and answers a riddle just before she is killed by Amarantha, and the curse is lifted. Tamlin, looking useless and helpless so far Under the Mountain, kills Amarantha and all his power, and other High Lords' are freed from the curse. In return, they give Feyre a kernel of their power and resurrect her as a fae. The first book of the series ends somewhat in a hopeful manner similar to a happily ever after ending; however, the second book titled "A Court of Mist and Fury" (2016) begins with a dark atmosphere.

Although Feyre is reunited with her beloved, neither of them is unaffected. Feyre and Tamlin both experience night terrors following their return, which can be interpreted as a form of post-traumatic stress disorder (Jorgensen, 2021). The situation for Feyre is worse since Tamlin restricts her movements within his estate and does not take her into his confidence on matters of governance. Therefore, she finds herself in a daze, unable to eat or hold her food, or to enjoy her relationship with the love of her life. As she is seriously traumatized and depressed and unable to receive any help or understanding from Tamlin, she escapes her marriage ceremony both willingly and unwillingly with Rhysand's assistance.

In his court Rhysand, the most powerful High Lord in history, and his inner circle befriend and take care of Feyre, and thus, she finally sees reason and leaves Tamlin for good. With all the powers bestowed by seven High Lords, she is as powerful as any other High Fae and High Lord and aspires to be able to use her powers to help Rhysand protect his people and the human realm against the evil King Hybern. She begins training in magical abilities, physical strength, and fighting skills. When she finds out she is Rhysand's mate, which constitutes an unbreakable mental and emotional bond between individuals, she invests all her resources into helping Rhysand as her equal and wife.

In the third book titled "A Court of Wings and Ruin" (2017) Feyre returns to the Autumn Court in pretend love with Tamlin. She undermines his authority and his people's love for him because he has sided with King Hybern against Rhysand and Feyre and helped the abduction and indirectly turning of Feyre's sisters who are turned into fae. When she destroys Tamlin, he realizes the error of his ways and regrets all the wrongs he has done to Feyre and his own people and helps them defeat the king and his armies.

In the end, Feyre and Rhysand defeat all their enemies and prosper in their beautiful city side by side with Feyre's sisters and Rhysand's inner circle. Their story continues in novellas, short stories, and spin-off books. It is hard to fully grasp the interconnectedness of all of Maas's works. But after reading Maas's other series titled the *Throne of Glass* and *Crescent City*, it becomes clear that these stories take place in a multiverse, connected through portals. The heroines in both series travel through these portals to Feyre's world. As a result, translating Maas's work without considering the larger picture of her multiverse is a demanding task.

The epic endeavor of translating Maas into Turkish has been undertaken by Dex Kitap, a branch of Doğan Kitap, established in 2011 specifically for young adult readers. Their current aim is to also target 25-35-year-old readers by translating authors like Samantha Young, and Jennifer Armentrout[1]. So far, Dex has published all of the main works of *Throne of Glass* (7 books) and *Crescent City* (2 books), and *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (4 books and 1 novella). It should be kept in mind that ever-productive Maas is still adding new volumes to the *Crescent City* and *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series.

The first volume of the series in question was published by Dex Kitap in Turkish in 2017, 2 years after the publication

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[1] https://www.dexkitap.com/hakkimizda/

of the original, followed by the publication of the second book in 2018, and finally, the third book was published in 2019. The time lapse between the originals and the translations can be frustrating for the fans and readers, as they are often exposed to spoiler material on social media and other digital social reading platforms.

While there is a lack of information concerning the Turkish translator of the series, Meriç Keleş on the publisher's web page, a quick LinkedIn research indicates an educational background in economics and mechanical engineering. This is not uncommon, as there is no prerequisite for educational background to qualify as a book translator in Turkey[2].

3. Participatory Culture in the Age of Digital Social Reading

Participatory culture has changed how people engage with literature. This culture emphasizes active involvement and collaborative content creation, creating a dynamic relationship between readers and texts (Moody, 2019). Platforms like Goodreads allow readers to share their thoughts on translated literary works, creating a rich and diverse conversation that transcends time and place (Nakamura, 2013). These platforms bring together a variety of reading communities, increasing the visibility of literature and highlighting the interplay between cultural artifacts and their audiences (Albrechtslund, 2020; Boot, 2023; Rebora et al., 2019).

The subject matter of this study, Goodreads, is an Amazon-owned digital social reading platform that was launched in 2007 by Otis and Elizabeth Chandler for "helping people find and share books they love"[3]. On this platform, users have profile pages similar to other social network sites, including their personal data and profile photos, as well as friends. The difference is that on their Goodreads profile, users have various default bookshelves titled *read, currently-reading, to-read*, and *favorite books* to which they can add more titles and volumes. As Nakamura stated, "the three bookshelves that all users start with are entitled 'read', 'currently-reading', and the conveniently shopping-list-like 'to-read,' thus organizing books around a temporality of consumption rather than genre, nation, electronic or analog form, or language" (Nakamura, 2013, p. 240).

On the home page, users can see the activities of their friends and those they follow. The homepage also has a section for recommendations in which the users can find books with similar tastes and previous ratings. Users can rate books according to their interests or tastes using a five-star rating system. It is not unusual for users to rate 3 stars, for example, and indicate in the commentary section that they are actually giving 3.5 stars. Another social activity is writing and replying to comments about books, which enables users to share their reading experiences with people outside their immediate friends' circles. They can even interact with authors and editors. Some authors are very responsive and active on Goodreads, answering messages and comments, and giving out free sample books, gifts, and autographs. According to Thelwall Kousha (2016) "Goodreads is therefore neither primarily a book-based website nor primarily a social network site but is a genuine hybrid, social navigation site" (p. 972).

As traditional literary reviewing is being challenged by the "rating culture" (Salgaro, 2022, p. 1), an influx of readers has begun to visit digital reading platforms such as Goodreads to rate the books they read and write comments. The content of these comments can range from a very detailed literary review to a few words of insults for the authors as well as the characters in a book. Moreover, author-bullying has emerged as a new phenomenon in such platforms, some of which could result in authors or publishers to postpone, or even altogether cancel the publication of books (Moody, 2019). Therefore, the publishing industry feels the pressure of the rating culture in earnest (Dimitrov et al., 2021).

Apart from harassing authors, Goodreaders interact with each other, establishing "affinity spaces" within the platform, which "serve as democratic social spaces that offer opportunities for equal participation and support the cultivation of passions shared by its users" (Vlieghe et al., 2016, p. 35). Moreover, publishers utilize Goodreads for industrial purposes (Albrechtslund, 2020; Bourrier & Thelwall, 2020; Driscoll & Rehberg Sedo, 2019; Moody, 2019). They have a wide selection in their arsenal from purchasing positive comments to giving out free books to influencers/reviewers, affecting the outcome of the ratings. Therefore, the platform also serves commercial purposes, treating book readers as consumers. As Nakamura puts it:

> By submitting our favorite book titles, readerly habits, ratings, comments, and replies (or "UGC," user-generated content) to our social network of readers, we are both collecting and being collected under a new regime of controlled consumerism. Goodreads shares its data with its partners, although, as it stresses in its privacy policy, the data are not personal. (Nakamura, 2013, p. 241)

Goodreads Reader's Choice Awards is another tool to promote books and authors, which can also be seen as a popularity contest. The pre-determined shortlists from different genres invite users to read the nominees' books and participate in the decision-making process. The winners are showcased under the title "Best Books of 2022" (or

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[2] https://ceviridernegi.org/
[3] https://www.goodreads.com/about/us

any other year) and posted on the home page, providing easier access for the users. The expression "Best Books" is problematic in that it feels too aggressive and leaves little room for argument for a competition dependent on user/reader opinion. However, it can be used for advertising and increasing the positive ratings of books, making Goodreads a very profitable enterprise (Nakamura, 2013).

The reception of translated literature is affected by the multi-layered nature of participatory culture on digital social reading platforms (Zheng & Fan, 2023). By engaging in dialogic interactions through reviews, ratings, and discussions, readers become co-creators of meaning and contribute significantly to the creation of interpretive communities. This collaborative creation of literary meaning facilitates understanding of cultural subtleties in translation, fostering cross-cultural appreciation. It is essential to be aware, however, that this democratization of interpretive authority can simultaneously lead to instances of misappropriation or distortion, necessitating careful examination of the interplay between online reception and the integrity of translations and translators (D'Egidio, 2015). The author-bullying tendencies can be traced also to translators, painting a large target on their backs. While constructive criticism can be a valuable tool for translators to make some alterations in their translations for future editions or the other volumes of the same series, resorting to such methods requires nerves of steel on the translator's part.

4. Methodology

Inductive qualitative content analysis is a systematic research method utilized within the realm of social sciences, as well as in the fields of Translation Studies, to analyze textual or visual data without preconceived categories or predefined theoretical frameworks. This method involves an iterative process of examining raw data, such as textual materials or cultural artifacts, to gain a deep understanding of their content. During the open coding phase, concepts, themes, or patterns are identified and labeled in a flexible manner without any predetermined categories, which allows for emergent themes to surface naturally. The subsequent axial coding stage refines and organizes these codes into categories or themes, resulting in a systematic structure that facilitates analysis. The final step involves selective coding, in which the researcher selects core categories and refines their definitions. During this process, it is important to constantly compare and use theoretical sampling to ensure that the analysis is robust and credible. (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023; Rebora et al., 2019) Inductive qualitative content analysis is a rigorous and data-driven way to extract meaningful insights from complex cultural and textual materials, which aligns with the overall goal of the current research. For the visualization of the process see Figure 1 below.
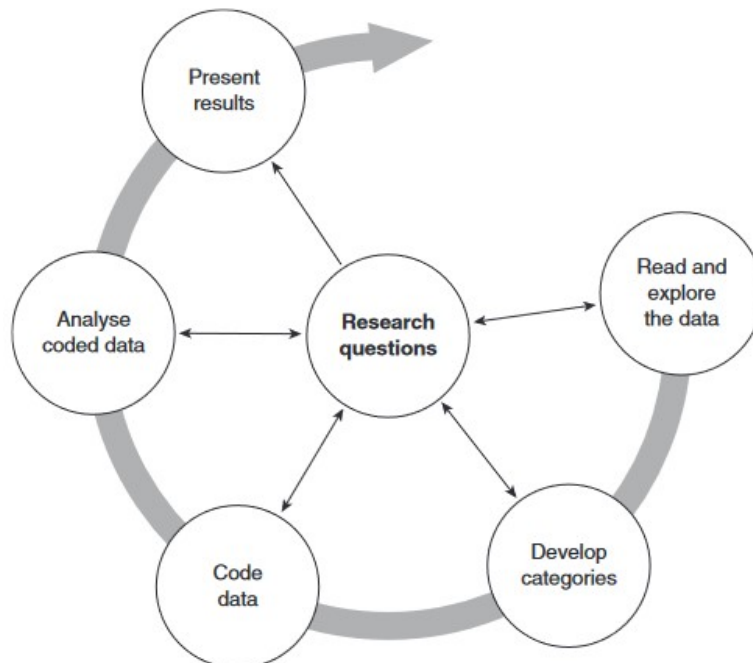

Figure 1. *General Process of Qualitative Content Analysis (Kuckartz and Rädiker, 2023, p. 81)*

Qualitative Data Analysis software (QDA) like MAXQDA are considered "one of the most innovative fields of social science methodology development" (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023, p. 160). Therefore, after determining the research questions and selecting the appropriate method, I used MAXQDA (2020) to download and analyze the data.

To begin, I utilized the Web Collector for MAXQDA to acquire Goodreads comments written in Turkish. This tool permits users to effortlessly obtain text and images from web pages and transfer them into MAXQDA software, where they can be organized and analyzed by the researcher. After thoroughly reviewing the comments to become acquainted with them, I started coding to create general categories. In the following stage, I added more detail and expanded the range by coding the data again. Finally, I conducted code analysis by organizing, merging, and deleting codes to prepare them for reporting.

A total of 608 comments (Book 1: 265 comments, Book 2: 212 comments, Book 3: 131 comments) have been analyzed. Upon conducting the analysis, it has become apparent that the primary demographic of readers consists of young females who exhibit a high level of activity on various social media platforms. Within the realm of commentary, there is a notable preference for informal language, incorporating social media slang, as well as a blend of English and Turkish. Furthermore, the utilization of diverse emojis and gif images is commonplace, serving as an effective means of conveying one's message with emotional intensity.

5. Findings

To answer the first research question "*How do Turkish readers on Goodreads receive young adult fantasy fiction?*", I gathered data on Goodreads concerning the number of ratings and comments about the first three books of the ACOTAR series. The statistics about the reader reception of the first three books of the ACOTAR series on Goodreads are given below. The first table is for the total statistics from all over the world, whereas the second one is only for readers who left a comment in Turkish.

Table 1. *The number of ratings and Comments for the ACOTR series*

	Total number of ratings	Total number of comments	5 stars	4 stars	3 stars	2 stars	1 star
Book 1	1,800,030	143,718	47%	33%	13%	3%	1%
Book 2	1,320,114	116,224	74%	18%	5%	1%	<1%
Book 3	1,075,304	77,426	60%	27%	8%	1%	<1%

	Number of ratings (Turkish)	Number of comments in Turkish	5 stars	4 stars	3 stars	2 stars	1 star
Book 1	unknown	265	43%	30%	21%	6%	2%
Book 2	unknown	212	73%	14%	7%	1%	2%
Book 3	unknown	131	65%	21%	10%	<1%	<1%

As can be deduced from the tables, the number of ratings is different from the number of comments as it is not obligatory to add a comment after rating a book. It is clear that most of the readers chose not to leave any comments after rating. The total number of ratings of the first book of the series is one million and eight hundred thousand, showing the high tendency to participate in the rating culture. It can be inferred from this number that many readers from all over the world, speaking different languages chose to voice their opinions about the books by using the tools provided by a digital social reading platform. The ratings of 4 stars and above show that the reception of the books, especially the second book, is highly positive. The Turkish readers' ratings of 4 stars and above are parallel to the total ratings, which is very high. A discrepancy seems to occur in 3-star ratings, which is higher than the total ratings.

The second and third research questions called for a thorough inductive content analysis:

- *How aware are Turkish YA fantasy readers of the translators or the translation processes?*
- *How does digital social reading affect the reception of YA fantasy fiction?*

Following the steps given in Figure 1, three categories containing several codes have been identified.

5.1. The reader reception of the translated books

Goodreaders who commented in Turkish mostly read the Turkish translation of the series, but some bilingual readers read either the English versions, or both. Zheng & Fan (2023) categorize readers into two groups: monolingual and bilingual. Bilingual readers, who are typically transtextual and intercultural, compare translations with the original text, while monolingual readers are generally "mono-cultural literary consumers" (Zheng & Fan, 2023, p. 411). Hickey (2003) distinguishes between professional and lay readers in translation criticism, emphasizing the potential for lay readers to identify illogical and contextually inadequate translations.

For those who do not speak (or read) English, the Turkish version of the books is the main source of their reception of Maas's work. When crediting the source text, Goodreaders often fail to consider the influence and decisions made by translators, resulting in zero recognition of their contribution. However, it can be observed from the comments that bilingual readers often include their opinions about the translation, translator, or publisher.

"I don't even want to go into the translation and proofreading. Translator, I would like to have your mindset as a translator who calls a 500-year-old fairy a "hıyar" and "harbi kızmış"[4], please. You seem to have a very relaxed and uncaring nature since the translation smells of sloppiness. I don't know who to attribute the missing sentences and the wrong and incomplete words since the book doesn't seem to have an editor. I couldn't find any information on the copyright page."[5]

"The first thing that drove me crazy was the @dexpub translation. First of all, it pissed me off that they have so little connection with Turkish. How can someone use words like "yabalamak", "tünik", "tıpışlamak"[6] so much? They appear so many times in the book that every time I saw them, I felt my blood boiling. There is an institution called TDK and an up-to-date dictionary. As if that wasn't enough, it is such a rude, slang, repulsive language that I read it with a grimace. It was like a nightmare. It was like a bum wrote the book. I don't know if the original book was also written in this language, but I'm sure Sarah doesn't use a writing style like, "Döşü gıllı ossun!"[7] I mean, even if you're going to like the book, it takes effort not to get annoyed with the translation. Especially if you are someone like me who is obsessed with proofreading."

As can be seen from the comments, some readers are inclined to criticize the translation and find out more about the publishing process of the books. However, the lack of information about the editor on the copyright page seems to confuse the reader. Still, some other Goodreaders are not surprised by the "sloppiness" in the Dex Kitap publications.

"Although I don't think you will be surprised to see Dex Kitap's spelling mistakes, let me warn you from the beginning. Still, the Kingdom of Ash[8] is the top, I think it is the worst of them all."

"I have two complaints. One is the blindness of the female characters in love and the second is the Dex translation. As usual, I don't understand how they translated these books."

Some readers stated that they initially refrained from starting the series because of the publisher.

"I was always putting off buying it because it was so popular and because it was a book by a certain publishing house. Anyway, whenever I tried to buy it, I couldn't find the edition or it was overpriced."

While bilingual readers, or those who are more inclined to focus on the language use of the translated books judge the literary work accordingly, others seem to be rather confused about whether to criticize the original author or the translator.

"There were logic errors. What's a "Kanada geyiği" doing in a world where Canada doesn't exist?"

This Goodreader criticizes Maas for being illogical, while the error should be attributed to the translator and editor. The term "moose" is translated as "Kanada geyiği", which means "Canadian deer" as there is only one term for this species in Turkish.

"I don't know if it is because of the translation or because the author writes the same thing over and over again, but in the book, someone is always "growling, hissing, roaring or purring", so hearing these words every 2 pages really annoyed me."

"Again, in some places, there were too many repeated words, whether from the translation or the author's own language use. There were so many words like fairy, cauldron..."

Here, the Goodreaders give the author the benefit of the doubt, as they are not sure whether the repetitiveness stems from the author or the translator. In the first example, the translator can be somewhat blameless, but the problem in the second example arises due to the lack of words related to "fairies" in Turkish. In the original, the terms "fairy,

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[4] These expressions are mostly used by youngsters in informal situations.
[5] Unless stated otherwise, all translations from Turkish belong to me.
[6] These words do not exist in Turkish.
[7] A heavily accented vulgar phrase.
[8] Another Maas book from the *Throne of Glass* series.

fae, faerie" have nuances and may mean different entities, while in Turkish there is only one term, "peri" which does not adequately refer to the blood-thirsty and warlike fae of Maas's world. Moreover, it would not be incorrect to claim that "peri" in Turkish refers to a more childish fairy tale character such as Tinkerbell of Neverland. Therefore, the repetitiveness may result either from the author, or the translator's choice, which can be dependent upon the cultural and lingual shifts between the target and source materials.

To summarize, for most of the Goodreaders commenting on the series the translator is invisible in the sense that the translation reads like the original, not because of the translator's source-text oriented choices but the readers' non-existent awareness of the process. Only 27 out of 608 (4.4%) comments are concerned with the translation or the translator of the series. For those who are bilingual or have a higher awareness, problems with translation and editing, as well as production and dissemination can be obvious and lead to reader/consumer dissatisfaction.

5.2. Social media influence and spoilers

The translated literature may not travel as fast as the original. As a result, readers (or fans) are heavily exposed to social media content that contains "spoilers". Such content may include comments, fan art, fan fiction, polls, interviews, and booktube videos. For example, Instagram offers content in accordance with the users' recent interests, thus, it is not easy to navigate around social media without seeing content without spoilers. While Goodreads warns readers against the comments with spoilers, other social media platforms are not as sensitive. Therefore, publishers of translated literature embark upon a race against time as some potential readers may be reluctant to buy or start reading books they already know the plot of.

> "Now I've had so many spoilers about this series that I didn't want to read the book even though I've had it for months. Honestly, it was more mediocre than I expected, not as perfect as I imagined. I thought it was a book worth the spoilers, but I was wrong."

As can be inferred from the quotation above, those Goodreaders who are exposed to spoilers have high expectations about the books, which may or may not be met after reading them.

> "But at that time, the sequels of the series hadn't been translated yet and to avoid spoilers, I wasn't even reading the excerpts. But after a while, the explore section of my Instagram became such that I kept coming across these posts and inevitably my eye would drift to the description and I couldn't skip without looking at it for a few seconds. This eventually led me to learn something I never wanted to learn about the plot. You can imagine my disappointment."

This comment highlights the inevitability of spoilers on social media and the resulting disappointment which can also discourage readers from continuing the series, even altogether giving up the author's works. Therefore, it can be claimed that too much exposure has become a problem for publishers and authors.

> "After seeing this spoiler, I was discouraged from continuing the series, I didn't want to read the new books even when they came out because I knew that the character I loved would be wasted, and I kept putting it off even though I knew I would eventually read it (because I had started the series once). It took me 4 years to finally get back to the series."

> "My thoughts about this book were all over the place because of all the spoilers and fanart I read. When I started to think that it was going to be a love triangle, I didn't have a single positive thought about the series. I was thinking about so many things while reading the book that I even lost interest in Rhysand for a while."

Another factor to take into consideration is that digital reading and social media platforms may turn readers into fans and hooligans who root for certain characters in the books. In the case of the ACOTAR series, readers seem to fall into two camps: Those for Tamlin or Rhysand. While some readers criticize Tamlin, others declare their love for Rhysand. Some express their tentative agreement with some of Tamlin's behaviors with a fear of "getting lynched". Showing devotion or unconditional support for characters who are not even real is a phenomenon popular among young adult fiction readers.

> "I've said a million times that I love Tamlin, I don't want to write anything about Rhys for now. I'm not afraid of being lynched or anything but people are too assertive. After book 2 I'm afraid of eating my words again."

We can understand from the comment above that there is an actual risk of "being lynched" on social media for supporting an unpopular character. As YA fantasy is full of enemies-to-lovers or vice versa plots, the readers may feel reluctant to make their opinions known before reading the most recent book in the series for fear of falling in with the wrong camp.

These quotations show that it has become virtually impossible to avoid spoilers and social media influence, even during an activity as personal as reading. Affinity spaces as digital social reading platforms tend to divide readers into camps and encourage them to choose sides. Although the opposite is aimed, the high amount of spoiler content and

conflict among readers can have negative effects on potential readers. As there is no viable way to avoid these, consumer demand puts high pressure on the publishers and translators, making them race against time and accumulating content.

5.3. Cultural norms and sexuality

As translation involves more than just transferring linguistic forms, it is natural for there to be discrepancies in the reception of translated literature with regard to cultural norms. It can be observed that sexuality and sex have become more frequent themes in the YA fantasy genre, especially based in the US. However, in other cultures, the target readers under 25 years old can find this uncomfortable to read. Some of the Turkish Goodreaders questioned how "young" this young adult series should be.

> "But unfortunately, there is a factor that made me deduct 1 star from this awesomeness: Sex scenes. Because I don't understand why our dear authors add such things to genres like fantasy, science fiction, and dystopia. No, if I wanted to read such things, I would read erotic novels, new adult novels, right dear author? What was the need to spoil the magic of our beautiful couple and the book? I really can't understand why you are so keen on writing such things. Okay, write romance, I also want something between Tam and Feyre, but don't do this. Just don't do it. I heard from foreigners that there was less of it in the second book, I hope so when it comes out in Turkish."

As the series is labeled "young adult", readers from Turkish culture may have different expectations from the ones in the US. In Turkish culture, young people, especially those under 18, are expected by society to be celibate. While it might or might not be the actual case, sex is taboo for young people. Therefore, some readers, especially women, may find it uncomfortable to read such graphic sex scenes as Maas often writes to the extent that the readers give up the series or the works of the author entirely.

> "I'm also curious how this book fits into the YA category. There is a lot of adult content in the second half. And it is quite detailed. As someone who reads a lot of young adult books, I can easily say that I have never come across a book with such detailed sexuality in this genre. And I am sorry to say that I will not read Sarah J. Maas again after this series ends. I cannot tolerate authors who try to impose something on their readers in line with their sales interests."

Apart from sex scenes, sexuality and sexual orientation are uncomfortable topics in Turkey. While it is not legally prohibited, these subjects are not openly discussed or debated in society. Thus, it is only natural for young people to criticize this theme in the series.

> "Actually, the reason why it was not 4 stars was that the author unnecessarily blared the sexual preference of some characters out. Fortunately, I came across this situation towards the end of the book."

It is clear that the reason why some Turkish Goodreaders rated the series down was the discrepancies in the cultural norms between the source and target texts. While the American young readers may find nothing wrong about the LGBTQ+ characters in the series, Turkish readers may feel uncomfortable.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

The action of reading and reception of literature are not as private and personal as it has been once assumed. In today's social media era, digital social reading has the ability to impact readers' opinions, thereby influencing sales, promotional strategies, and the decisions of authors, editors, and translators. As a result, affinity spaces, such as Goodreads, do not exist in isolation but are formed in a highly interconnected and socially influenced environment. Digital social reading goes beyond the mere act of reading and evolves into a collaborative enterprise that combines interpretations, cross-cultural dialogues, and authorial negotiations. Participatory engagement in translated literature holds significant implications for both enriching intercultural discourse and examining its various dimensions in a nuanced manner. It is crucial to explore the evolving relationship between participatory culture and translated literary corpus, particularly in the context of rapid digital technology expansion.

The focus of this study is the reader reception of the translated literature, therefore it selects one of the most highly-rated young adult fantasy fiction series on Goodreads, Sarah J. Maas's "A Court of Thorns and Roses", which has been rated by approximately 1.5 million readers. The digital social reading platform, Goodreads, is an affinity space for millions of readers from all over the world to share their literary interests and opinions on the Internet where bookworms are turned into "neoliberal consumers" (Nakamura, 2013, p. 241). The series serves as an excellent example of how the fantasy genre can be used to explore personal growth and imagination. This is especially significant in literary scholarship as it highlights the capacity of young adult fantasy to bridge the gap between imagination and real-life experiences. The series has kindled a current of social media posts, reviews, booktube videos, fan art, and fan fiction among young adults, which constitute a highly effective way to promote and increase the sales of the author's works.

Following the inductive content analysis of 608 comments in Turkish, it can be concluded that while the reader

reception of the ACOTAR series in Turkish is very similar to its worldwide ratings on the digital social reading platform Goodreads, interesting codes can be found qualitatively. According to the findings, Turkish Goodreaders are mostly unaware of the translation and publication process of the translated literature and tend to confuse the translator's decisions with the original (and vice versa). For those who are bilingual readers and with higher awareness, the quality of both the translation and the edition is lacking. These Goodreaders criticize the publisher and call for a more diligent editing process and higher quality edition.

Another theme concerning the social media influence of the digital social reading phenomenon is the inevitableness of spoiler content, which increases the reader's expectations and lowers the excitement about the plot. Readers who are incessantly subjected to spoiler content tend to feel disappointed, sometimes giving up reading the series of the author altogether. The lag between the release date of the original and the translation is frustrating for Goodreaders, resulting in more spoiler exposure, and consequently creating more pressure for all actors in the publishing industry. Moreover, the "adult" in young adult fantasy fiction can be considered a misnomer by some cultures. Therefore, some Goodreaders questioned how "adult" this series should be and stated that they would stop buying the author's books because of the adult content in her works. It is clear that while such content increases the popularity of the genre, it may create the opposite effect for readers from different cultures.

One limitation of this study stems from the low number of comments in Turkish. While some comments are long and detailed, others are comprised of one sentence or just a few word impressions. Another limitation is concerned with the platform selected. This study focuses only on Goodreads comments, while there are other websites and platforms where readers discuss books such as kitapyurdu.com, ekşisözlük, or amazon.com. Although the low number of comments in Turkish seems to be a limitation of this study, it should not be unexpected or discouraging for the researchers. A considerable gap in the literature on digital social reading is still waiting to be further explored. Future research can look into various platforms and comments in different languages. AI-assisted corpus studies can also bear meaningful data.

The inclusive nature of digital social reading platforms cannot be separated from the issues of power dynamics and fair representation. The way translated literature is received on platforms like Goodreads highlights the influence of readers as they engage with stories from diverse cultural backgrounds. At the same time, it emphasizes the vital role that gatekeepers such as translators, publishers, and platform administrators play in selecting and presenting translated works. Therefore, to understand how readers participate in the literary world, we must carefully examine the complex power dynamics that shape the entire ecosystem.

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