

SCIENCE FICTION IN TURKEY: SURVIVAL OF A GENRE THROUGH RETRANSLATIONS AND REPRINTS

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ABSTRACT

This research has revealed that science fiction as a sub-genre was introduced as “an option” into Ottoman and Turkish “culture repertoire” (Even-Zohar, 1997a; 1997b; 2002) via translations in the 19th century. Then from the 19th century onwards, the science fiction genre has continued to exist in the target repertoire mostly via translations, retranslations and reprints. For example, 383 retranslations of Jules Verne’s 32 novels were published in the period between 1875 and 2013, and 27 retranslations of Robert Louis Stevenson’s Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886) have been presented to Turkish readers after its first translation by Hamdi Varoğlu in 1942. The number of indigenous science fiction novels has been lower than the number of translations until now. This study will reveal that some publishers have devoted their time and effort to promote the science fiction sub-genre in Turkey. From the 1950s onwards, almost each decade has witnessed a novel publisher with a new series of re/translations. This study aims to suggest the interlinked role of translators and retranslators who form a small group within the repertoire of popular literature, and their persistent struggle to introduce, establish and reinforce the popularity of this genre in Turkey.

Key Words: Retranslation, Science Fiction, Turkish Culture Repertoire, Agent of Change

TÜRKİYE’DE BİLİM KURGU: YENİDEN ÇEVİRİ VE YENİDEN BASIM YOLUYLA VARLIĞINI SÜRDÜREN BİR TÜR

ÖZET

Bu araştırmanın amacı bilim kurgu türünün 19. yüzyılda Osmanlı ve Türk “kültür repertuarına” (Even Zohar, 1997a; 1997b; 2002) çeviri yolu ile girdiğini ortaya koymaktır. Bilim kurgu çevirileri yayınevleri tarafından okurlara “fenni roman” olarak sunulmuştur. Yapılan araştırma, 19. yüzyıldan itibaren bilim kurgu türünün Türk kültür repertuarında çoğunlukla çeviriler, yeniden çeviriler ve yeniden basımlar yoluyla varlığını sürdürdüğünü ortaya çıkarmıştır. Örneğin, 1875 ve 2013 yılları arasında Jules Verne’in 32 romanının 383 yeniden çevirisi yayınlanmıştır. Bu çalışmada ayrıntılı olarak sunulacağı üzere, bugüne dek basılan yerli bilim kurgu romanlarının sayısı çeviri bilim kurgu romanları sayısından hep daha az olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Çeviriler ve yeniden çeviriler üzerine yoğunlaşarak bilim kurgu türünde en çok çeviri yapan çevirmenler, editörler ve yayınevleri birbiriyle

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yakın ilişki içinde olan çeviri özneleri olarak ele alınacaktır. Bu makalede yeniden çeviriler ve yeniden basımların bilim kurgu türünün Türk kültür repertuarına bir seçenek olarak sunulmasının yanısıra türün repertuardaki varlığını sürdürmesine ve yerli metin üretiminin önünü açmasına neden olduğu tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeniden Çeviri, Bilim Kurgu, Türk Kültür Repertuarı, Değişim Öznesi

Many literary historians claim that the first works of science fiction can be traced back to the second century A.D. in the True Story of Lucian of Samosata (Bleiler, 1990; Roberts, 2006), whereas many others argue that it started with Thomas More's Utopia (1516) in the 16th century (James and Mendlesohn, 2003). With its long history, science fiction as a distinct genre has also attracted the attention of many scholars from the field of linguistics, literary studies³ and more recently translation studies⁴ worldwide. In Turkey, the academic interest in science fiction began only after the 1970s⁵, although translations of the science fiction novels started to be published in the

³ For more information see Meyers, E.W. (1980). *Aliens and Linguists. Language Study and Science-Fiction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press; Freedman, C. (2000). *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press; London, B. (2002). *Science Fiction After 1900: From the Steam Man to the Stars*. NY and London: Routledge; D'Amassa, D. (2005). *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Literary Movements; Roberts, A. (2006). *The History of Science Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴ Some examples are: Mossop, B. (1996). The Image of Translation in Science Fiction and Astronomy. *The Translator*, 2(1): 1-26; Sohár, A. (1999). *The Cultural Transfer of Science Fiction and Fantasy in Hungary 1989-1995*. Frankfurt/M., Berlin: Peter Lang; Mäkelä, L. (2003). The Finnish subtitling of neologisms in the science fiction television series Stargate SG-1. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Helsinki; Hernández, Teri J. (2005). Translating Verne: An Extraordinary Journey. *Science Fiction Studies*, 32(1): 142-149.

⁵ Some examples for these studies are; Özdeş, M. (1991). Geçmiş Zamanın Bilim-Kurgu Çevirileri ve Çocuk. *Metis Çeviri Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol.14: 117-119; Atılğan, İ. (2008). *Einführung in die Türkische Science Fiction Literatur: Von der Osmanischen Zeit bis 2000*. Klagenfurt, Austria: Wieser Verlag. Şeran, F. Ö. (2009). Reflections of Political Ideologies and Changing Political Systems on Science Fiction Literature: Comparing Utopian and Dystopian Novels, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Marmara University, İstanbul; Azeri, A. (2009). Robert Louis Stevenson'ın Yazınsal Eserlerinin Türkçe Çevirilerinin Betimlenmesi: Treasure Island'dan Define Adası'na. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, İstanbul University, İstanbul; Reyhanoğulları, G. (2012). Türk Edebiyatının İlk Bilim-Kurgu Öyküleri ve Orhan Duru. *Turkish Studies*, 7(3): 2183-2197; Güney, K. M. (2015). Çağının Aynası Olarak Bilimkurgu: İnsanın Doğa ve Teknolojiye Bakışı Nasıl Dönüştü? in Şahin, S., Öztürk, B. and Büyükarman, D.A. (eds.) *Edebiyatın İzinde: Fantastik ve Bilimkurgu*, İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınevi, 36-43.

Ottoman period in the 19th century. Seda Uyanık, in her book entitled *Osmanlı Bilim Kurgusu: Fennî Edebiyat* (2013) [Ottoman Science Fiction: Scientific Literature], claims that Jules Verne and H. George Wells's works were introduced as "scientific novels" [fenni roman] to the Ottoman "culture repertoire" (Even-Zohar, 1997a). She proves her claim by pointing out to the catalogues in which Verne's and Wells' texts had been presented as scientific novels in the 19th century (Uyanık, 2013, p. 45-46). The presentation of these books as "scientific novels" was not unique to Ottoman culture. In the same period, Verne and Wells were introduced with a similar announcement as well, as authors of "scientific romance", in the West (James and Mendlesohn, 2003). Discussions on the term itself continued even in the 20th century. For example, in the West, "scientifiction" was also offered before "science fiction" and in Turkey "imaginative science" [hayal-bilim] and "fiction science" [kurgu-bilim] were discussed as equivalent terms (Mollamustafaoğlu, 1983, p. 64). In 1927, the name of the genre as "science fiction" was given by Hugo Gernsback and the Turkish equivalent "bilim kurgu"⁶ was coined by Orhan Duru in 1973.

Uyanık's comprehensive study on the Ottoman science fiction novels further displays that Verne and Wells were accepted as the first representatives of science fiction and the genre entered into Turkish culture repertoire via translation. In this research, starting with the publication of Verne's translation *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873) in 1875, we compiled a list of retranslated, translated and indigenous science fiction novels published in Turkey between 1875 and 2013.⁷ The list includes only novels which are clearly cited as "science fiction" in the catalogues, bibliographies or presented as such by the publishing companies. Here is the graph showing the distribution of retranslated, translated and indigenous science fiction in Turkey.

⁶ This is Turkish literal equivalent of the term "science fiction".

⁷ The sources used for the compilation of our list are the Catalogues of National Library of Turkey, the Catalogue of Turkish Works Published in Ottoman Script (Arabic, Armenian and Greek Characters) by M. Seyfettin Özege, the Personal Library of Talat Öncü and online book stores.

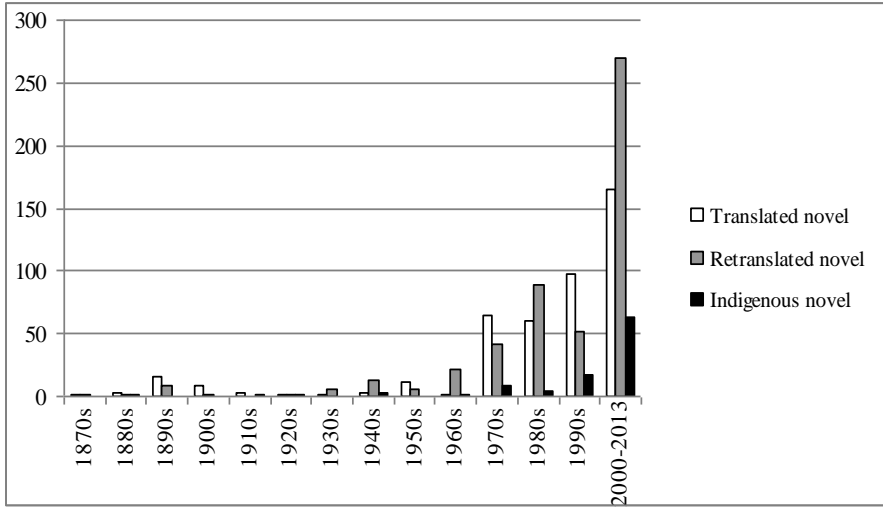


Figure 1: Translated, retranslated and indigenous novels between 1870 and 2013

At first glance, it can be clearly seen from the graph that the number of translations outnumbers the number of indigenous texts. Secondly, it appears that the number of retranslations is surprisingly high and competing with the number of translations. From 1875 until the 1950s, 44 works were translated and retranslated and whereas only 7 indigenous novels appeared in the market in the same period.⁸

The graph clearly displays that the genre of science fiction was not only introduced but also ensured its continuity in the culture repertoire via translations and retranslations. Here the concept of “culture repertoire” is used in Itamar Even-Zohar’s terms, suggesting that “the cultural repertoire is the aggregate of options utilized by a group of people, and by the individual members of the group, for the organization of life” (Even-Zohar, 1997a, p. 355). Culture repertoire tends to “introduce new options through invention or importation, whether intentional or unintentional, by anonymous contributors or known members of the society” (Even-Zohar, 2002, p. 168).

⁸ It can be clearly observed that except in the 1970s, the period after the 1980s and especially the 2000s have witnessed a higher number of retranslations compared to first translations. One of the reasons of this boom might be the increase in the science fiction films and TV series. For instance, Robert J. Sawyer’s novel, *Flashforward* was published in 1999 in the USA. The novel was adapted into television series and was aired in the USA between 2009 and 2010. The Turkish translation of the novel was published in 2010. Thus, it would not be wrong to suggest that as far as science fiction is considered, films and TV series affect, or even accelerate the publication of translations in Turkey.

Even-Zohar calls these identified or unidentified individuals who conduct the presentation, production or integration of options as “agents of transfer” (ibid.). In our case, we will try to show the interlinked role of a small group of publishers, translators, retranslators, authors, and magazine owners in promoting science fiction novels as an “option” in the Turkish literary repertoire. We will argue that these translators and retranslators acted as “self-appointed agents” of translation (Toury, 2002, p. 151), and thanks to these agents that the genre gained a ground in Turkey especially between the 1950s and 1980s. As Figure 1 displays, it started to flourish with indigenous works as well after 2000s.

A closer look at the numbers of science fiction production reveals that the number of first translations makes up 34 % of the total number of production, while the number of retranslations makes up 39 % of the total production.⁹ Here are the total numbers of translations, retranslations and reprints produced between 1875 and 2013:

The number of first translations	439
The number of retranslations	512
The number of reprints	357

Table 1: The number of translations, retranslations and reprints

The number of retranslations outnumbers the number of first translations. Our research has further revealed that these novels were produced by 233 first translators and 204 retranslators. In addition, there seems to have been a considerable amount of reprints, which makes up the 24 % of the total production. When we consider the number of retranslations together with the number of reprints, together they occupy 66% of the total production. This implies that in comparison to first translations, the genre mostly owes its survival to retranslations and reprints in the Turkish culture repertoire.

Paloposki and Koskinen suggest that a similar tendency is observed in the Finnish context. They interpret the presence of high number of reprints in Finnish culture repertoire in these words: “[...] what astonished us most is the number of reprints, which can be interpreted, not negatively as a lack of the will to translate, but positively as a desire to keep a stock of works available for the readers” (Paloposki and Koskinen, 2010, p. 34). They

⁹ For more information on the concept of retranslation, see Tahir Gürçağlar, Ş. (2008). Retranslation. in Baker, Mona; Saldanha, Gabriela (eds.). *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 2nd edition. London/New York: Routledge, 233-236.

further argue that “there are publishers concentrating on new titles and do not have any reprints or retranslations; there are others who favor retranslations over reprints; and there are those who tend to favor reprints” (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2003, p. 29-30). Finally, they observe that “the smaller (and the newer) the publishing house, the less likely it is to use reprints and vice versa” (ibid.,30).

Some findings of our case complement the findings of Koskinen and Paloposki. Our research has shown that Çağlayan and Okat publishing companies can be given as examples for the first case in the Koskinen and Paloposki’s classification, in that they opted for new titles and first translations. Baskan publishing company, Alem Matbaası Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekası [Alem printing house, Ahmed İhsan and his partners] and Bahar publishing company (1988), for example, favor retranslations over reprints as in the second case. On the contrary, İş Bankası Kültür publishing company, Metis, Remzi and Timaş publishing companies tend to favor reprints over retranslations as in the third case. Different from Koskinen and Paloposki’s observations, our list provides an additional case, a fourth case which does not exist in their classification. There are some publishing companies who favor both retranslations and reprints, such as İthaki, Altın Kitaplar and İnkılap publishing companies. İthaki published 37 retranslations and 39 reprints between the 1990s and 2013, and İnkılap published 19 retranslations and 22 reprints between the 1930s and 2013.

Paloposki and Koskinen make further observations about the differences between the productions of old and new publishing companies. They suggest that;

Not everything can be translated, as that would be too costly; a choice has to be made regarding what to reprint and what to retranslate, and the choice at times seems to be random. One possible answer is the different profiles of the publishers at different times: while some seem to favor retranslations (especially young publishing houses which naturally do not have the stock to recycle), others focus on reprints (and here is the older publishing companies that do have the required stock). (2010, p. 34-35)

In a similar vein, some older publishing houses in Turkey, such as Remzi (1927) and İş Bankası Kültür (1956) publishing companies prefer reprints over retranslations, while some young publishing houses, such as Renk (1970?) and Bahar (1988) publishing companies prefer retranslations mostly. Yet, different from Paloposki and Koskinen’s findings, it can be seen that some older publishing houses like İnkılap (1927) and Altın Kitaplar (1957) published both retranslations and reprints.

A further finding of our research is that some translators, retranslators, magazine owners and authors, and also some publishers seem to have devoted all their effort to promote the genre in Turkey. For instance, the mostly retranslated author in the genre seems to be Jules Verne with 32 translated novels and 383 retranslations. The second mostly retranslated author is Robert Louis Stevenson with 27 retranslations of his book *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and Isaac Asimov followed Stevenson with 13 retranslations. Many of these retranslated novels appeared under a series allocated to the genre of science fiction especially between the 1950s and 1990s. We identified that five companies published 96 novels in five series, and in the same period 349 novels were published outside the series. The list of these five series is given in the table below:

Period	Publishing company	Name of series	Number of books	Number of translators	Translators
1950s	Çağlayan	Yeni Dünyalarda [Nes Worlds]	10	2	Necati Kanatsız (3) A.Kahraman (7)
1970s	Okat	Uzay [Space]	16	3	Reha Pınar (14) Vecdi Bürün (1) Fügen Beğen (1)
1970s	Altın Kitaplar	Uzay Yolu [Space Trek]	9	1	Reha Pınar (9)
1980s	Baskan	Kurgu Bilim [Fiction Science]	25	12	¹⁰
1990s	Metis	Bilim Kurgu [Science Fiction]	36	16	¹¹

Table 2: The list of five series in ten years time intervals between 1950 and 2000

From the table, it can be inferred that in a 30-year time between the 1950s and 1970s, five translators produced all translations and retranslations. These are the leading advocates of the genre in Turkey: Necati Kanatsız with 3 translations, A. Kahraman with 7 translations, Reha Pınar with 23 translations, one of which is a retranslation, and Vecdi Bürün ve Fügen

¹⁰ Atilla Tokatlı (6), Ayşe-Osman Talat Taşkın (2), Osman Talat Taşkın (3), Yücel Aydemir (2), Orhan Yüksel (1), Şerif Yenen (1), Aslı Kayabal (4), Dilara Özman (1), İlker Tuğal (1), Mustafa Şarman (1), Fatoş Sanderson (2), Faruk Kurt (1)

¹¹ Çiğdem E. İpek (5), Belma Aksun (2), Metin Çetin (4), Tuba Çele (2), Fatma Taşkent (2), Güzide Gürbüz (1), Ferhan Ertürk (3), Irma D. Çimen (3), Özlem Dinçkal (1), Sönmez Güven (5), Nazlı Korkut (2), Mehmet Morali (2), Levent Mollamustafaoğlu (1), Dost Körpe (1), Tuna Erdem (1), Emil Keyder (1)

Beğler with one translation. Compared to previous three decades, the number of translators started to increase in the 1980s. Another finding is that the two translators of Çağlayan publishing house translated the novels under pseudonyms. Necati Kanatsız is the pseudonym used by Refik Erduran, the owner of Çağlayan publishing house and A.Kahraman is the pseudonym used by Kemal Tahir, a prominent writer and also the translator and pseudotranslator of many crime novels for Çağlayan publishing house in Turkey.¹²

The analysis on the life and works of these agents of translation has shown that they undertake many roles in the process of preparing retranslations and translations. Some are only retranslators, whereas some others are both first translators and retranslators. Some of the retranslators and first translators are also autonomous authors. The majority of agents undertake more than one role, such as translator-researcher and translator-publisher. Some translator-authors (for instance Orhan Duru) have made research on the specifics of science-fiction writing and its history and published their articles in various magazines. Even more surprisingly some translator-authors own publishing houses (for instance Metin Atak), and some translator-author-researchers own magazines, for instance Zühtü Bayar (the magazine Galaktika) and Selma Mine (the magazine X-Bilinmeyen). Lastly, some indigenous authors act as researchers and some of these authors are magazine owners.¹³

Our survey on the agents of translation listed above has revealed that there is a small group of people in the production of science fiction in Turkey. It has been due to their persistent efforts that science fiction as a distinct sub-genre has continued to retain its popularity throughout the so-called years. Furthermore this research has shown that this small group of agents seems to have produced and published texts in a complex web of

¹² For more information about pseudotranslations of Kemal Tahir see, Tahir-Gürçağlar, Ş. (2008). *The Politics and Poetics of Translation in Turkey*. Amsterdam, NY: Rodopi, and Tahir-Gürçağlar, Ş. (2008). Sherlock Holmes in the intercultural: Pseudotranslation and anonymity in Turkish literature. in Anthony Pym, Miriam Shlesinger and Daniel Simeoni (eds.) *Beyond Descriptive Translation Studies: investigations in homage to Gideon Toury*, Benjamins publishing, 133-152. For more information about pseudotranslations in Turkey see, Tahir-Gürçağlar, Ş. (2010). Scouting the borders of translation: pseudotranslation, concealed translations and authorship in twentieth-century Turkey. *Translation Studies*, 3(2): 172-187.

¹³ In 1971, the first science fiction magazine *Antares*, was started by Sezar Erkin Ergin (Bayar, 2001:189). Bayar suggest that *Antares* accelerated the efforts of Turkish science fiction writers and it provided the young writers with an opportunity to write science fiction stories (2001:199). The second magazine *X-Bilinmeyen* was launched in 1976 by Selma Mine who wrote many science fiction novels (www.x-bilinmeyen.org).

relations. For example, *Mavi Ölüm* (1955) [Blue Death] is the title given to the translation of *The Long Loud Silence* written by Wilson Tucker in 1952. Its first translator was A.Kahraman, the pseudonym by Kemal Tahir, who is a prominent writer in Turkey. It was published by Çağlayan publishing company under the series of “Yeni Dünyalarda [New Worlds]”. The same source text *The Long Loud Silence* was then retranslated under the title (of) *Dünya Batıyor* [The world is going down] and published by Okat publishing company in 1971. It was retranslated by Reha Pınar who was one of the most prolific translators of the series at the time as was shown in the previous table. The retranslation was presented within the “Uzay [Space] Series”. Most of the books in the same series were translated by Reha Pınar. This series was advertised in a review in the journal *Türk Dili*, which is a long-lasting prominent literary periodical in Turkey.¹⁴ The review was penned by Orhan Duru, who is also the author of science fiction texts, one of which is “Harita” published in the magazine *X-Bilinmeyen* in 1980. The owner and editor of *X-Bilinmeyen* magazine is Selma Mine, who is both an author and translator. She retranslated *24. Yüzyılda Cinayet* [Murder in the 24th century] in 1983. The first translation of this book entitled *Anarşist* [Anarchist] was translated by Reha Pınar and published in 1971 by Okat publishing company. The translators, retranslators, editors and authors, as the above explained set of relations imply, seem to have known each other and have systematically undertaken several roles in the process of producing and promoting science fiction texts.

In conclusion, this research has shown that the genre of science fiction was introduced to Turkish culture repertoire by translations and retranslations, and it owes its survival mostly to retranslations and reprints rather than the new translations. These translations and retranslations have later paved the way for Turkish authors to produce indigenous novels. It was also observed that the number of translated and retranslated texts in circulation is still higher than the number of indigenously produced science fiction texts. In addition, the research has revealed that there has been a small group of translators and retranslators who were actively involved in the production between 1950 and 1990, but the number of these agents increased after the 2000s. This small group of translators and retranslators seem to have been in charge of interlinked roles in this process. Thus it would not be wrong to suggest that the advocates of this sub-genre worked in a network in which they undertook several roles as translators, retranslators, and even authors, researchers, publishers and magazine owners. Furthermore, we suggest that retranslated and reprinted novels together with the stories published in the magazines have helped to establish

¹⁴ *Türk Dili* is a prominent journal on Turkish literature which has been published by the Turkish Language Institution since 1951.

and reinforce the popularity of science fiction in Turkey for more than a century.

The reasons underlying the higher number of retranslations and reprints than the number of translations would be a subject of a future work which might shed light to the publishers' decisions as well. Science fiction magazines appear to be another untouched study area, since these include many translations and some of these magazines even include bilingual stories in Turkish and English. Finally, a further analysis on textual relations would be instrumental to dig out the differences between first and retranslations. Such an analysis would bring out diachronic information about the changing translational strategies, and ideologies and value judgements in Turkish literary context.

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