

# Different Roles Played by Translators While Recontextualizing Turkish Literature: Navigating Contextual Voices

**Türk Edebiyatının Yeniden Bağlamsallaştırılmasında Çevirmenlerin Üstlendiği Farklı Roller: Bağlamsal Sesler Odağında Bir İnceleme**

Research/Araştırma

**Halise GÜLMÜŞ SİRKINTI**

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## ABSTRACT

National literature can only gain recognition in other languages through translation, which places an important responsibility on the translator, especially in the process of recontextualization. This study examines the multiple roles translators play in the internationalization of Turkish literature. Focusing on *The Turkish Theatre*, *Tales Alive in Turkey*, and *Yunus Emre: Selected Poems*, different roles assumed by translators are explored within the framework of textual and contextual voices in translation. The works analyzed in this study are characterized by a large number of contextual materials such as prefaces, introductions, notes, and introductory chapters most of which are written by the translators themselves. Therefore, the concept of textual and contextual voices is used as a framework to analyze the different roles of translators in the re-contextualization of Turkish literature. By examining all these contextual voices, it is assumed that the role of translators as agents with different responsibilities in the recontextualization of Turkish literary products for English-speaking audiences can be better understood. The analysis has shown that by writing introductory parts, selecting specific plays, tales, and poems, and framing them for foreign audiences, the translators contribute to the recontextualization, transmission, and reception of Turkish literature in ways that go beyond mere linguistic translation and shape its reception in the English-speaking world. In doing so, they assumed roles not only as translators but also as authors, cultural mediators, informants, facilitators of cross-cultural understanding, and even editors, which may reveal the multifaceted responsibilities of translators in the recontextualization of national literature for a foreign audience.

**Keywords:** literary translation, recontextualization, Turkish literature, contextual voices in translation, translators as cultural mediators.

## ÖZET

Ulusal edebiyatın diğer dillerde tanınması ancak çeviri yoluyla mümkün olabilmekte, bu durum özellikle yeniden bağlamsallaştırma sürecinde çevirmene önemli sorumluluklar yüklemektedir. Bu çalışma, çevirmenlerin Türk edebiyatının uluslararasılaşmasında üstlendikleri rolleri incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. *The Turkish Theatre, Tales Alive in Turkey* ve *Yunus Emre: Selected Poems* başlıklı eserlerde çevirmenlerin üstlendikleri farklı roller, çeviride metinsel ve bağlamsal sesler çerçevesinde incelenmektedir. Çalışmada incelenen eserlerde, çoğunluğu çevirmenlerin kendileri tarafından kaleme alınmış olan açıklayıcı kısımlar, önsözler, giriş yazıları ve notlar gibi bağlamsal materyallerin çokluğu göze çarpmaktadır. Bu nedenle çalışmada, Türk edebiyatının yeniden bağlamsallaştırılmasında çevirmenlerin farklı rollerini analiz etmek için metinsel ve bağlamsal sesler kavramı kavramsal çerçeve olarak kullanılmaktadır. Tüm bu bağlamsal seslerin incelenmesiyle, Türk edebiyatı ürünlerinin İngilizce konuşan kitleler için yeniden bağlamsallaştırılmasında farklı sorumlulukları olan araçlar olarak çevirmenlerin rolünün daha iyi anlaşılacağı varsayılmaktadır. İnceleme sonuçları, çevirmenlerin giriş bölümleri yazarak, belirli oyunları, hikayeleri ve şiirleri seçerek ve bunları yabancı okurlar için şekillendirerek sunmalarıyla Türk edebiyatının uluslararası alanda tanınırlığına dilsel aktarımın çok daha ötesine geçen şekillerde katkıda bulduklarını göstermiştir. Yeniden bağlamsallaştırma sürecinde Çevirmenlerin sadece çevirmen olarak değil, aynı zamanda yazar, kültürel aracı, bilgi sağlayıcı, kültürler arası iletişimi kolaylaştırıcı ve dahası editör rolleri üstlendikleri görülmüştür. Tüm bunlar, ulusal edebiyatın yeni bir okur kitlesi için yeniden bağlamsallaştırılmasında çevirmenlere düşen çok yönlü sorumlulukları gözler önüne sermektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** edebi çeviri, yeniden bağlamsallaştırma, Türk edebiyatı, çeviride bağlamsal sesler, kültürel aracı olarak çevirmenler.

## 1. Introduction

The recognition of national literature beyond its native language relies upon translation, which highlights the crucial role of the translator in shaping how the text is understood in a new cultural and linguistic context. However, the meaning of an utterance can change considerably depending on the context in which it is situated, as it is shaped by what Bakhtin (1981) calls the “dialogizing background”. In this process, the surrounding context influences how the utterance is interpreted, often resulting in a shift in its meaning. Bakhtin explains this situation noting that “Given the appropriate methods for framing, one may bring about fundamental changes even in another’s utterance accurately quoted” (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 301). Building on Bakhtin’s emphasis on the significant role of context Linell (2004, p. 115) asserts that when we communicate, we first “decontextualize” elements from their original context and then “recontextualize” them into a new one. “Decontextualization” refers to the process of removing a text or discourse from its original setting. This involves the detachment of the text or discourse from the contextual elements that initially shape its meaning. However, between these two processes lies a third phenomenon, which Bauman and Briggs (1990) term “entextualization”. They define this term as “the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit—a text—that can be

lifted out of its interactional setting” (Bauman and Briggs, 1990, p. 73). Each shift highlights different aspects of their meaning, and new meaning potentials emerge as any process of recontextualization necessarily involves transformations (Schäffner and Bassnett, 2010, p. 2). As Linell (1998) clarifies, the prefix “re-” in the concept of “recontextualization” should be understood in the sense of “reform” or “revise” rather than “again”. This aligns with the translation process, in which texts are decontextualized from their original linguistic and cultural environments, entextualized into a portable discourse, and subsequently recontextualized into a new cultural and linguistic framework. This phenomenon has been approached from different perspectives by different scholars, who focus on aspects such as cultural norms, paratextual elements, and ideological positioning. This is exemplified by Neslihan Kansu Yetkiner (2009), who examined the recontextualization of a Dutch public health brochure into Turkish and demonstrated how cultural norms influence the translation process through summary, distortion, and manipulation. Additionally, Cihan Alan (2021) focused on the recontextualization of religious elements in different Turkish translations of Tolstoy's *What Men Live By* (1885).

As paratextual elements act as recontextualization tools by shaping how a text is adapted and understood within a new context, while also mediating the reader's experience before they encounter the main text (Kansu Yetkiner et al., 2018), their analysis is essential for understanding recontextualization. The recontextualization process can be observed in translations through the use of prefaces, explanatory notes, or footnotes that provide cultural context (Greenall & Løfaldli, 2019, p. 244). This is exemplified in Ayşe Banu Karadağ's (2013) comprehensive study, which examined the prefaces and epilogues of translations by six female translators who rendered Western-language texts into Ottoman Turkish during the Tanzimat and Second Constitutional Era by highlighting the importance of paratexts in understanding how female translators navigated their roles within a male-dominated literary system. Similarly, Şule Demirkol Ertürk (2019) examined how paratexts legitimize and recontextualize Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (1954) in its two English translations. Likewise, Selin Erkul Yağcı (2019) examined how paratexts and retranlations popularize canonical works like *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) and *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844) in Turkey. Aysun Kiran (2020) also analyzed the role of paratextual elements in shaping the presentation of Ece Temelkuran's works in their English translations for the UK audience. Furthermore, a comprehensive study by Kansu Yetkiner et al. (2023), conducted as part of a TÜBİTAK project (220K032), examined prefaces in the (re)translations of English modernist novels into Turkish and emphasized the ideological roles and multilayered functions of these paratextual elements in framing texts for the target culture. In a further exploration of paratexts, Hilal Erkazancı Durmuş (2023) employed a sociological lens to examine the paratextual packaging of Suat Derviş *In the Shadow of the Yalı* (1958) and explored how translation mediates cultural representation and challenges stereotypes. These studies collectively demonstrate the impact of paratextual elements on the reception of individual works and the construction of broader cultural narratives.

As “in a world increasingly preoccupied with the fantasy of instant global connectedness, the burden of translation falls on non-English speakers” (Simon, 2006,

p. 185) translators face different responsibilities and challenges when translating non-English literatures for a global audience. In the examination of Turkish literature in English translation, one striking feature is the abundance of paratextual materials authored by the translators integrated into these works. This observation of abundant paratextual materials by the translators serves as the starting point of this study.

Tahir Gürçağlar notes that “prefaces created by translators are of special importance for translation history and research on translation in general” as they “offer the readers a rare moment of direct contact with the translator” (2013, p. 90). The value of translator’s prefaces is undeniable; however, it has been observed that Turkish literature in English translation include much more than prefaces. There are introductory parts, whole chapters, suggested reading lists authored by the translators themselves. Building on this, the present study, which employs a qualitative, descriptive design, aims to investigate the various roles translators assume in the recontextualization of Turkish literature into English by analyzing *The Turkish Theatre* (1933) by Nicholas N. Martinovitch, *Tales Alive in Turkey* (1966) by Warren S. Walker and Ahmet Edip Uysal, and *Yunus Emre: Selected Poems* (1990) by Talat Sait Halman<sup>1</sup>. The roles assumed by translators in these three works are examined in the light of “textual and contextual voices” concept introduced by Alvstad et al. (2017). These three works were deliberately selected as they each represent different literary genres, including plays, poems, and tales. Furthermore, they contain a substantial amount of contextual material, much of which was authored by the translators themselves. It is hypothesized that the richness of paratextual materials in these translations demonstrates the translators’ active involvement and their distinct roles in recontextualizing Turkish literature. Examining these materials authored by translators may offer valuable insights into the various roles they assume in the recontextualization process. To address this aim, the study investigates the following research questions:

- (1) What roles do translators play in shaping the cultural and contextual framing of Turkish literature for an international audience?
- (2) How are paratextual materials utilized to contribute to the recontextualization of Turkish literature?
- (3) How do the roles assumed by translators differ across *The Turkish Theatre*, *Tales Alive in Turkey*, and *Yunus Emre: Selected Poems*, and what does this reveal about the diverse responsibilities of translators in the recontextualization of Turkish literature?

## **2. Textual and Contextual Voices in a Translated Text**

The concept of the translator’s voice highlights the “discursive presence of the translator” in a translated text. This presence becomes particularly evident in instances where the source text is deeply rooted in its cultural context, features wordplay, or presents structural and contextual challenges during translation (Hermans, 1996). The

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<sup>1</sup> For more works of Turkish literature in English translation, please see: (Paker & Yılmaz, 2012; Horzum & Ağin, 2021).

translator's voice was not only associated with overt interventions such as footnotes or explanatory notes (Hermans, 1996), but also with paratextual elements, including introductions, prefaces, and even book covers (Munday, 2008). The translator's voice in a translated text can also be revealed through subtler interventions, such as omissions, rewriting, and summarizing and these interventions can be identified through comparative analyses of the source and target texts (Munday, 2008).

Furthermore, the concept extends beyond textual markers to encompass sociological dimensions, where translators mediate the values, ideologies, and cultural aspects embedded in the source text (Hermans, 2014). The concept of voice in translation studies has been explored from different perspectives, which highlights its different interpretations. In this regard, Taivalkoski-Shilov (2015, p. 60) defined voice as "the set of textual signs that mark a subjective or collective presence in a text" and demonstrated how retranslations often reflect the retranslator's voice. Koskinen and Paloposki (2015) also highlighted the impact of initial translations on retranslations, as later translators often position themselves in relation to their predecessors by illustrating how voice evolves across successive translation efforts.

To provide a comprehensive and systematic framework for understanding the concept of "voice" Alvstad and Assis Rosa (2015) proposed a model that classifies this concept into two principal categories: textual voices and contextual voices. Textual voices include "the voices found within the translated texts", while contextual voices are related to "the voices of those involved in shaping, commenting on, or otherwise influencing the textual voices" (Alvstad et al., 2017, p. 3). As they explain "the latter appear in prefaces, reviews, and other texts that surround the translated texts and provide them with a context" (Alvstad et al., 2017, p. 3). An examination of both the textual and contextual voices may lead to a better understanding of the translation process and product (Alvstad et al., 2017). To highlight their focus on various materials related to translation, they introduce the concept of "contextual material" rather than using Genette's well-established term "paratexts" as contextual material "has a wider scope as it includes all kinds of materials related to a specific translation that allows us as researchers to shed light on the voices either in or around this text" (Alvstad et al., 2017, pp. 5-6). As Tahir Gürçağlar (2002) suggests, extratextual and paratextual materials can be used to reveal translational phenomena, Alvstad et al. (2017) believe that observing the voices of translation at both the textual and contextual levels not only provide a more comprehensive view but is also crucial for conducting a reliable analysis.

Within this study the contextual voices authored by the translators are used mainly to highlight the multiple roles of the translators in the internationalization process of Turkish literature. The contextual voices regarding *The Turkish Theatre* (1933), *Tales Alive in Turkey* (1966), and Ahmet Edip Uysal, and *Yunus Emre: Selected Poems* (1990) are explored to identify the different roles assumed by translators in the recontextualization process. The contextual materials authored by the translators in each of the works analyzed in this study are provided in the table below (Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Contextual Materials Across the Selected Works*

|  | <b><i>The Turkish Theatre</i></b>           | <b><i>Tales Alive in Turkey</i></b>                      | <b><i>Yunus Emre: Selected Poems</i></b> |
|--|---|--|--|
|  | <b>Translator:</b> Nicholas N. Martinovitch | <b>Translator:</b> Warren S. Walker and Ahmet Edip Uysal | <b>Translator:</b> Talat Sait Halman     |
| <b>Materials Authored by Translators</b> | Preface                                     | Acknowledgement  | Chapter Titled “Yunus Emre’s Humanism”   |
|  | Chapter titled “The Turkish Theatre”        | Introduction   | Notes on Translation                     |
|  | Dictionary                                  | Seven Introductory Parts for Each Type of Folk Tales     | Notes on Some Names and Terms            |
|  |   | Translators’ Notes                                       | Suggested Further Reading                |

### **3. Contextual Analysis of *The Turkish Theatre***

*The Turkish Theatre* (1933) by Nicholas N. Martinovitch, who was a professor at Saint Petersburg State University in the Department of Oriental Languages, focuses on traditional Turkish theater forms namely Orta Oyunu, Meddah, and Karagöz, and provides translations of these unique Turkish theatre plays. It is worth noting that Martinovitch was depicted on the inside cover of the book as the author rather than the translator. *The Turkish Theatre*, published in 1933 by Theatre Arts in New York, provides English translations of some Turkish plays along with their cultural context. Within this study, the roles assumed by Martinovitch while recontextualizing traditional Turkish theatre are examined through the preface, “The Turkish Theatre” chapter which includes introductory texts on traditional Turkish theatre forms such as Orta Oyunu, Meddah and Karagöz, the short dictionary at the end of the book that provides definitions for Turkish terms left untranslated, and the bibliography which was added for the people who wants to continue to read on Turkish theatre more after this book.

#### **3.1 Analysis of Preface in *The Turkish Theatre***

In the preface of *The Turkish Theatre*, Martinovitch (1933, pp. 5-8) acknowledges that while Western readers are familiar with Islamic and Persian traditions, there is a relative lack of familiarity with the rich internal life and history of Turkish culture. Within this regard, Martinovitch (1933, p. 7) explicitly states the aim of his book, noting “The aim of the present work is to give the cultured layman a trustworthy book written in popular form by a specialist”, he also asserts that he attempts to “form some idea of what the Turkish theatre is like” for foreign audiences. This declaration highlights the intention behind the book: making Turkish theatre accessible to a broader audience and establishing a bridge between the Turkish cultural heritage and its reception in the West. He aims to recontextualize Turkish theatre, in a way that makes it comprehensible and appealing to an English-speaking audience. Martinovitch also outlines his translation

strategy by stating “the translation of the plays is free and not literal; otherwise, the lay reader would be smothered in a mass of explanatory notes” (1933, p. 14). Furthermore, he states that “to translate them [oriental words] each time would be to sacrifice color” (7) and this reflects his choice to leave culture-specific terms in Turkish within the text and add a vocabulary section at the end of the book to introduce the unique elements of Turkish culture instead of erasing them as a cultural mediator.

### **3.2 Analysis of the Introductory Chapter for Ortaoyunu, Meddah, and Karagöz in *The Turkish Theatre***

Before offering his translations of Turkish plays, in the chapter “The Turkish Theatre” he writes distinct sections for each form of traditional Turkish theatre: Orta Oyunu, Meddah, and Karagöz, where he examines their historical evolution, cultural background, and defining characteristics (Martinovitch, 1933, pp. 13-29).

In the part of Orta Oyunu, Martinovitch (1933, pp. 13-45) draws a notable comparison between this form of Turkish theatre and mime. He asserts that the arrangement, course of action, and dialogue construction are all strikingly similar, noting that “the arrangement is the same, the course of action the same, even the dialogue construction has much in common” (1933, p. 13). Additionally, he draws parallels between Orta Oyunu and Italian commedia dell'arte, emphasizing the similarities between the two. It can be said that by comparing Orta Oyunu to European forms like mime and Italian commedia dell'arte, Martinovitch makes traditional Turkish theater more accessible to foreign readers, emphasizing its potential similarities with Western theatre forms. Furthermore, Martinovitch introduces several stereotypical characters from Orta Oyunu, such as Pişekâr, Kavuklu, and Zenne. He also challenges established European views by asserting that “in old Turkey, before the 17th century, political freedom, despite widespread European opinion to the contrary, was an actual fact” (1933, p. 15). He further introduces Turkish social dynamics by highlighting that “in the 17th century penmen and citizens loudly, publicly, and with impunity, expressed bitter words of truth to the Sultan himself” (1933, p. 15). He serves as a mediator, encouraging understanding across cultures by questioning conventional European viewpoints. In the part of Meddah, Martinovitch (1933, pp. 21-29) recontextualizes this traditional Turkish theatrical form for English-speaking audiences by highlighting its improvisational skill and emphasizes the Meddah’s unique role in reflecting social realities through imitation and satire. Martinovitch also asserts that the Meddah is more than just a transmitter of stories; he actively engages with the audience, reshaping narratives to comment on contemporary issues. In the Karagöz part, Martinovitch notes Karagöz’s similarities to European genres noting that “Karagoz is besides closely related—the cousin or brother—to all the similar popular puppet theatres of various countries of Europe; the English Punch, the French Guignol, the German Hanswurst, the Italian Pulcinella, the Russian Petrushka, and others”, while highlighting its strong ties to Sufi mysticism, Turkish folklore, and Ottoman court entertainment (1933, p. 31). He also pays close attention to the traditional clothing of the characters in the plays and explains them in detail to overcome cultural gaps.

### **3.3 Analysis of the Dictionary in *The Turkish Theatre***

Unlike typical translator's notes, Martinovitch (1933, pp. 121-124) incorporates a dictionary titled as "Vocabulary", which provides definitions for 158 Turkish terms left untranslated in the plays at the end of the book. However, in addition to the dictionary Martinovitch explains culturally bound terms directly into the text by offering explanations in the immediate context. For example, when the word *ağa* is mentioned in a sentence it is defined as follows: "According to the old custom, the artists are called aga, which means master, eldest brother, sir; the chief artists are named usta, or teacher" (Martinovitch, 1933, p. 20). In another example, *boza* is explained as "boza (a slightly intoxicating drink)" (Martinovitch, 1933, p. 109), and *bakshish* is defined as "they are giving bakshish (English—tips; French—pourboire; German-Trinkgeld)" (Martinovitch, 1933, p. 116). By adding these definitions and explanations into the text, Martinovitch allows readers to engage with Turkish culture without breaking the flow of the narrative. However, these terms are revisited in the dictionary at the end of the book and *ağa* is defined as "master, eldest brother, sir, commander"; *boza* as "a drink made from malted millet, tart and sometimes slightly intoxicating"; and *bakshish* as "tips, drink money, bribe" (Martinovitch, p. 121). By offering explanations both within the text and in the dictionary, Martinovitch enhances the reader's understanding. This highlights the translator's role not only as a linguistic mediator but also as a cultural mediator who conveys the cultural dimensions of the source texts.

### **4. Contextual Analysis of *Tales Alive in Turkey***

*Tales Alive in Turkey* by Warren S. Walker and Ahmet Edip Uysal was first published in 1966 by Harvard University Press in Cambridge and it was reprinted by Texas Tech University Press in 1990. On both the inside and outside covers Warren S. Walker and Ahmet Edip Uysal are listed as the authors of the book, rather than translators. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Edip Uysal was a faculty member at the Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography at Ankara University. He also served as the founding dean of the Faculty of Education at Middle East Technical University and Warren Walker was a Professor of English at Texas University (Farah, 1992, p. 58). The folktales presented in this book were collected directly from oral sources in various Turkish cities between October 1961 and October 1964 by Warren and Uysal. Their research involved over 10,000 kilometers of travel, mainly through rural areas. Drawing from over 200 cities, towns, and villages across various regions, including cities like Antakya, Edirne, and Erzurum. After the challenging process of collecting these source texts, they translated the folktales into English and presented them in this book. Information about the storytellers and the time the tales are also mentioned at the end of the book. Walker and Uysal continued to collect tales after this book and published another book titled *More Tales Alive in Turkey*. However, they collected even more tales, which they preserved in the Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative (ATON) at Texas Tech University (<http://aton.ttu.edu/>). Acknowledgement, division of tales, seven introductory parts written by Warren and Uysal for each type of folktales in the book, and translators' notes are analyzed to explore the roles assumed by Walker and Uysal.



#### **4.1 Analysis of the Acknowledgement and Introduction in *Tales Alive in Turkey***

The book begins with a one-page acknowledgement by Walker and Uysal and they express gratitude to colleagues from various departments, including History, English, and Ethnology. This highlights the involvement of experts from different fields as key contributors and this indicates that the production of this book involved a larger number of agents. In their introduction, Walker and Uysal (1990, p. 3) describe their translation strategy as “quite literal” but they do not elaborate on whether the stories were translated jointly, separately by one of them, or through a fair division of labor. They mention that some stories—roughly 8–10% of the total stories—were omitted as they were deemed inappropriate for English and American audiences. This may demonstrate the translators' editorial authority by implying that they had considerable control over which stories were included. Walker and Uysal (1990, pp. 4-5) mention that the folktales in their book are categorized according to *The Types of the Folktale* by Aarne and Thompson and *Typen Türkischer Volksmärchen* by Eberhard and Boratav. The motif numbers in their book are also following Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. However, they mention reducing the number of original groupings from twenty-three to only seven by concentrating on key motifs and naming their chapters accordingly. Referencing esteemed works in the field of folktales may be interpreted as a sign of their efforts to link Turkish folklore to global scientific frameworks and their deliberate reorganization of motifs may demonstrate their role as an authority and even an editor in the production process of the book.

#### **4.2 Analysis of the Seven Introductory Parts Written by Warren and Uysal in *Tales Alive in Turkey***

The folk tales they collected and subsequently translated are categorized under seven subheadings: Supernatural Tales, Perplexities and Ingenious Deductions, Humorous Tales, Moralistic Tales, Köroghlu, Anticlerical Tales and Anecdotes. Before presenting these folktales that are deeply rooted in Turkish culture to an international audience, they provide an introductory part for each type of tale, offering a more detailed contextualization of the tales. These introductory parts written by the translators in their dual role as both translators and authors are also examined as key contextual elements.

In their introduction to Supernatural Tales, they refer once more to the work of Eberhard and Boratav. Walker and Uysal (1990, p. 7) state that Eberhard and Boratav's argument is that Turkish tales with supernatural elements are now predominantly urban, that rural tales have lost their fantastical qualities, and that realistic stories have replaced märchen (Eng. fairytale). However, Walker and Uysal (1990, p. 7) assert that their own materials, which are largely collected from villages and towns, contradict Eberhard and Boratav's initial claim and only partially support the second and third. By selecting, presenting, and recontextualizing materials in a distinctive manner, they even challenge predominant works. In doing so, they may assert their role as authoritative cultural mediators and scholars. They provide detailed explanations of the names and roles of local Turkish folktale characters, including Keloğlan and Köse. They also outline the types of stories in which these characters typically appear. By offering

comprehensive explanations of these characters and their significance in Turkish culture before presenting the tales, it can be argued that they again serve as cultural mediators, providing valuable contextual and background information.

In the introductory part of the Humorous Tales, Walker and Uysal (1990, p.140) state, “apparently no culture is without its humor, and that of the Turks has its full share, for folk laughter flows from every coffee house door”. Similar to their earlier discussion of Keloğlan, they provide brief information about the traditional Turkish character Karagöz and the traditional Turkish shadow puppet theatre for foreign readers (Walker & Uysal, 1990, p.140). This contextualization provides readers with insight into these Turkish characters' historical and cultural significance and enhances their comprehension.

In Köroğlu's introduction, Walker and Uysal (1990, p. 190) portray Köroğlu as a famous character in Turkish folklore, drawing comparisons to Robin Hood for his resistance to injustice and support of the poor. By making this comparison, they may aim to help English and American readers relate to Köroğlu through the familiar figure of Robin Hood. They also highlight Köroğlu's dual role as both a folk hero and a celebrated poet and note his widespread influence across Anatolia through songs and tales. Their introduction provides background information on the significance of Köroğlu in Turkish folklore and facilitates a deeper understanding of the tales that follow.

Warren and Uysal (1990, p. 211) undertake a comparative analysis of Turkish humorous tales with those of Western cultures, including “the fabliaux” of Continental Europe, “the limericks” of the British Isles, and the “preacher stories” of the modern American South in the introduction of Anticlerical Tales part. By emphasizing these similarities, Walker and Uysal may assist English and American readers in relating to Turkish humor by situating it within a context with which they are already familiar as in the case of Robin Hood. This approach may also reflect their role as cultural mediators and intermediaries who facilitate cross-cultural understanding.

In the introduction to the anecdotes section, they (1990, pp. 224-225) describe Turkish *fıkra* as a brief, real-world anecdote that often conveys moral lessons, reveals truths, or pokes fun at human nature. Additionally, they introduce well-known figures such as Nasreddin Hodja, who they refer to as “the Turk's favorite comic figure” (1990, p. 224), and mention numerous volumes of tales that have been published in other languages. In addition to Nasreddin Hodja, they provide information about other characters from Turkish *fikras*, including Bekri Mustafa, Injili Chavush, and the Bektashis to facilitate comprehension for international audiences. It can be said that they act as informants in these parts.

### **4.3 Analysis of the Translators' Notes in *Tales Alive in Turkey***

The abundance of culture-specific items from Turkish culture, traditions, and social life inherent in the translated folktales posed significant challenges for the translators throughout the translation process. This may be seen through the frequent use of the translator's notes, which have been appended separately for each section. There are 8

translators' notes for the introduction, 112 notes for the Tales of the Supernatural part, 31 notes for the Perplexities and Ingenious Deductions part, 51 notes for the Humorous Tales part, 25 notes for the Moralistic Tales part, 41 notes for the Köroghlu part, 17 notes for the Anticlerical Tales part, and 60 notes for the Anecdotes part. All of these 345 notes have been compiled and added to the end of the book.

By including comprehensive clarifications in these notes, the translators intended to help English-speaking readers better comprehend and interact with the details of Turkish culture. A notable observation that emerges from the analysis of these notes is that translators frequently employ cultural comparisons to facilitate comprehension of certain concepts for English-speaking readers. For example, when conveying the Turkish title *Bey* they liken it to the English "Mr" as seen in the note, "The word bey is now commonly used after a man's first name as a sign of respect (Hasan Bey), much as Mr. is used before a surname in English" (Walker & Uysal, 1990, p. 263). Similarly, to explain the unique Turkish concept of the *kahvehane* Walker and Uysal distinguish it from a cafe or a restaurant, stating that "The Turkish coffee house is not like a European or American cafe or restaurant. Only coffee and tea are served —no food. Customers are all male." (1990, p. 290). Additionally, they explain what an *ağa* is and how he differs from landlords in England and Scotland, adding, "Aga is the unofficial title of respect given to a wealthy landlord in Turkey. Comparable to an English squire or a Scottish laird, he is the chief personage in a village, often ruling it in an arbitrary and almost feudal manner." (1990, p.290). All these comparisons and explanations may suggest that the translators appear to not only act as cultural mediators but also demonstrate strong ties with both the source and target cultures.

The first part, entitled Tales of the Supernatural, is notable for its extensive annotations comprising 112 translators' notes. For this reason, the notes from this section were selected for a detailed analysis in this study. Three primary note types have emerged from the analysis of these 112 translators' notes: those explaining cultural and social practices, those clarifying untranslated culture-bounded parts, and those providing historical and religious background for events or concepts.

A significant amount of the notes are devoted to clarifying Turkish cultural and social traditions to help English-speaking readers understand the norms embedded in the tales. For example, in note 22 they (Walker & Uysal, 1990, p.262) elucidate the tradition of dyeing the hands of the bride and her attendants with henna several days before the wedding, which serves as a public symbol of the forthcoming marriage. Similarly, in note 23 Walker and Uysal (1990, p. 262) address the tradition of offering a reward to the bearer of good news, where a messenger is rewarded even before disclosing the news itself. In note 61 they (1990, p. 266) describe the old Turkish tradition of giving parting gifts to guests, ranging from leftover food to a gold coin in wealthier households. They further explain that hosts would often humorously say, "This is for the rental of your teeth" to justify the gesture and ease the guests' pride. These explanations give readers from outside Türkiye access to a cultural context that they might not otherwise know.

Certain notes provide clarification on culture-specific terms that have no direct English translation and are left untranslated. In these cases, the translators provide clarifications to bridge the cultural gap. For example, the Turkish word *kismet*, which means fate or destiny, is kept as it is in the translation of the tale and it was explained as being something “often thought to be written on one’s forehead and visible to those with religious insight” (Walker & Uysal, 1990, p. 259). Similarly, *yufka*, a type of thin, unleavened bread, is described in detail, including its preparation process and texture, to help the reader understand its significance in Turkish cuisine (Walker & Uysal, 1990, p. 268).

In some notes, Walker and Uysal also provide religious and historical context. As an example, in note 5 they (1990, pp. 258–259) describe how beards are revered in Muslim civilizations, especially the beard of the Prophet Mohammed, which is even preserved at the Mevlevi temple in Konya. The Islamic practice of doing ablutions before prayer is also covered in note 11. The note emphasizes the practice’s significance in Muslims’ everyday religious life by highlighting its symbolism of both bodily and spiritual purity (Walker & Uysal, 1990, p. 260). These explanations offer readers new insights into the religious customs that govern the tales.

## **5. Contextual Analysis of Yunus Emre: Selected Poems**

*Yunus Emre: Selected Poems* was published in 1990 by the General Directorate of Libraries and Publications of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye and Talat Sait Halman was listed as the translator on the inside cover of the book. Halman, a distinguished Turkish poet, critic, and translator, held academic positions at New York University, as well as at Columbia, the University of Pennsylvania, and Princeton. Halman, as the author of over 30 books in both Turkish and English, translated works of Shakespeare into Turkish and made a significant contribution to the international recognition of Turkish literature by compiling and translating Turkish literary works for English-speaking audiences. His poetry translations have also been the subject of critical studies (Okuyuz, 2016; Aksoy Arıkan & Temür, 2019). Within this regard, the chapter on Yunus Emre’s humanism, the parts entitled “notes on translation” and “notes on some names and terms”, and the suggested readings part are analyzed to explore the different roles assumed by Halman.

### **5.1 Analysis of the Introductory Chapter Titled “Yunus Emre’s Humanism” in *Yunus Emre: Selected Poems***

Although he was only depicted as the translator of the book, the book starts with a chapter authored by Halman, entitled “Yunus Emre’s Humanism”. Before the presentation of the translated poems, Halman provides a detailed historical context in this chapter, which spans 24 pages and helps to facilitate readers’ understanding of Yunus Emre’s humanism within the broader framework of Turkish culture. To illustrate this, he describes the historical development of Turkish humanism and emphasizes that Turkish humanism emerged long before the adoption of Islam and identifies the influence of Sufism and mysticism on this early form of humanism (1990, pp. ix-x). After

tracing the roots of Turkish humanism and noting that “the seeds of humanism which the Turks brought with them found fertile ground in Anatolia, where Sufism (Islamic mysticism) had firmly established itself” (Halman, 1990, p. ix), Halman connects these roots to Yunus Emre, positioning him as a key figure in this tradition. He draws a comparison between the religious establishment of Yunus Emre’s time and that of the medieval Christian Church noting that “The religious establishment in Yunus Emre’s day, like the transcendental philosophy of the medieval Christian Church, was preaching scorn for the human being...” (1990, p. xi). Halman aims to help readers better understand Yunus Emre’s perspective by relating it to something more familiar to them. Halman also highlights Yunus Emre’s references to the “four holy books” rather than a strict adherence to the Koran and Halman (1990, xiv) asserts that “Yunus Emre represents what Abbé Bremond defined humanisma *dévot*”. In this manner, Halman draws a parallel between Yunus Emre’s approach and Bremond’s concept, which represents a synthesis of religious devotion and humanistic values. Through these depictions, Halman portrays Yunus Emre as a figure whose beliefs transcend religious boundaries, which may show that this chapter written by Halman aims to introduce Yunus Emre to foreign audiences and to make him more accessible to a wider audience and act as a cultural mediator and a facilitator of cross-cultural understanding.

## **5.2 Analysis of the Parts Titled “Notes on Translation” and “Notes on Some Names and Terms”, and Suggested Further Reading List in *Yunus Emre: Selected Poems***

When it comes to the translation strategies, Halman depicts his translation as “essentially conventional and faithful” in the part “notes on translation”. He also explains that “no free versions of Yunus Emre’s poems are included, although some of the translations omit the rhymes” (1990, xxiii). He explains the characteristic features of the poetry of Yunus Emre and in line with them, he continues with his own translation strategies. As an example, he mentions the frequent use of half rhymes and assonances by Yunus Emre and notes that most of his translations preserve these poetic devices. He also explains that the name of the poet appears in the final stanza of most of the poems as a signature, which is also kept in translations. Instances of wordplay in Yunus Emre’s poetry are also addressed. It can be said that he is acting as an informant by sharing the details of Yunus Emre’s poetry.

Furthermore, in the part “notes on some names and terms”, Halman provides clarifications for five key terms to increase the understandability of the translation for readers unfamiliar with Turkish and Islamic mysticism. He offers explanations and context for terms such as “friend”, “lover”, “God’s truth” and he explains figures such as Majnun and Mansur al Hallaj. As “friend” and “lover” are generally used to refer to God rather than a human being in Yunus Emre’s poetry, Halman needs to clarify the fluidity of these terms. By offering these explanations he acts as a cultural mediator who wants to ensure that the spiritual and mystical sides of Yunus Emre’s poetry can be understood. He also added five suggested books for further reading. Moreover, in “Suggested Further Reading” part by suggesting additional five resources written in English for readers who would like to further explore Yunus Emre more, Halman extends his role beyond that of a translator.

## 6. Conclusion

Through the analysis of *The Turkish Theatre*, *Tales Alive in Turkey*, and *Yunus Emre: Selected Poems*, this study examines different roles and responsibilities assumed by translators in the recontextualization and internationalization of Turkish literature. In this challenging process, firstly, translators decontextualize elements of Turkish literature from their original sociocultural settings, entextualize them into coherent and transferable texts, and finally recontextualize these works within new cultural and literary frameworks. As contextual analysis of the works has revealed that translators frequently exceed the conventional boundaries of their role in this recontextualization process. By incorporating contextual materials they have authored, translators present Turkish literature to international audiences in a more accessible and engaging way. In doing so, the role of them goes beyond the act of linguistic transmission; they affect the way of presenting Turkish literature to foreign audiences, not only by translating texts, but also by acting as cultural mediators, authors, informants, editors, and facilitators of cross-cultural understanding.

Nicholas N. Martinovitch is presented as the author rather than the translator of *The Turkish Theatre*, which underscores his role as a cultural mediator. His contextual voices include detailed contextualization of traditional Turkish theatre forms and a dictionary for the untranslated Turkish culture-bound terms. By authoring introductory sections on Turkish traditional theatre forms Martinovitch acts as a cultural mediator, and he also fosters cross-cultural understanding by drawing parallels between Turkish and Western theatre traditions. He also offers essential cultural knowledge to foreign readers as an informant by adding a dictionary of Turkish terms. Similarly, Warren S. Walker and Ahmet Edip Uysal, presented as authors rather than translators of *Tales Alive in Turkey*, establish their authority by undertaking the selection and classification of the folktales and providing comprehensive introductory sections for seven types of folktales. In the introduction parts Walker and Uysal also facilitate cross-cultural understanding by contextualizing Turkish folk figures to their Western counterparts. They bridge the cultural gap between Turkish folklore and Western audiences. Similarly, in the translator's notes included at the end of the book, they frequently employ cultural comparisons to enhance the comprehensibility of the text for English-speaking audiences, this further illustrate their active role in cross-cultural understanding. Talat Sait Halman, explicitly presented as the translator of *Yunus Emre: Selected Poems*, also go beyond the traditional role of a translator by actively shaping the cultural framework in which Yunus Emre's poetry is presented. The introductory chapter authored by Halman, titled 'Yunus Emre's Humanism' provides a philosophical and historical context that enables readers to engage more deeply with Yunus Emre's ideas. Halman, who relates Yunus Emre's philosophy to familiar Western concepts and helps readers understand his poetry better, acts as a facilitator. By adding notes and terms at the end of the book, he also takes on the roles of informant and mediator.

The analysis results have shown that all three translators authored contextual materials to prepare readers for their translations. Martinovitch presented Turkish theatre's cultural and historical context; Walker and Uysal provided detailed introductions for folktales; Halman framed Yunus Emre's poetry within humanist and philosophical discussions although he is credited only as the translator on the book cover. As informants, they educated their target audiences about Turkish theatre, folktales, and poetry. Despite working with different literary genres, they all drew parallels between Turkish culture and its Western counterparts, acting as cultural mediators and facilitators of cross-cultural understanding. As can be seen translators are not only responsible for conveying meaning across languages but also shaping the reception of Turkish literature through their editorial decisions, contextual framing, and the inclusion of contextual materials. The analysis suggests that translators operate within what Wolf (2007) describes as a "mediation space", a "dynamic and hybrid site where cultural interactions and negotiations occur". In navigating this space, translators assume multiple roles, not only facilitating communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries but also influencing how Turkish literature is perceived.

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