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Interpreters' Lack of Agency in Postcolonial Environments: A Postmodern Perspective

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Abstract

This work investigates the task of the translator in a postcolonial setting. The short story, "Sizin Memlekette Eşek Yok Mu?" [Don't You Have Any Donkeys in Your Country?] by the Turkish satirist, Aziz Nesin, is selected to throw light on the social and political status quo of translators in nonwestern cultures and the impact of imperialism. Using the politics of postmodernism and postcolonial theory, the paper shows how the marginalization of a Turkish interpreter working in the service of an ethnocentric oriental-rug merchant is representative of power relations between the 'developing world' and imperialistic states. Some pertinent notions from postcolonial theory including mimicry and hegemony are summoned to illustrate the sharply polarized binary author/ translator. The study also discusses how the extensively studied issue of the invisibility of translators is linked to the essentialist principles of faithfulness, equivalence, and symmetry in translation.

Keywords: Aziz Nesin, Postmodernism, Postcolonial theory, Imperialism, Invisibility, Symmetry, Author/ Translator binary.

Among the heavily researched areas in translation studies lately is how translation overlaps with literary theory especially postcolonialism and postmodernism. This overlap has led to the "cultural turn" in translation studies in the 1990s and resulted in the expansion of research and theory and contributed substantially to the acknowledgment of translation studies as a fully-fledged discipline.

The philosophies of literary theory, each with its own conceptual framework and perspective, offer very interesting ways to view and evaluate the task of the translator. Anthony Pym believes that "translation theorists and practitioners have referred to philosophical discourses for support and authority for their ideas" (2007, 24). Shamma (2009) points out that postcolonial theory has helped develop translation theories not merely through the "investigation of actual (post)colonial interactions, but also as a mode of analysis that could illustrate crucial issues of identity, difference, and power" (195).

This article investigates how a nonwestern interpreter is portrayed in the short story "Don't You Have Any Donkeys in Your Country?" by the Turkish satirical writer, Mehmet Nusret Nesin (1915-1995), who wrote under the pseudonym Aziz Nesin. It uses features from postmodernism and

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postcolonial theory which are, as Acheraïou maintained, "conceptually and ideologically enmeshed" (2011, 144) to throw light on the political characterization of the interpreter and the fragile position of translators who work in postcolonial environments contributing partly to research on translation in the nonwestern tradition. The article dwells on ideological principles in postmodernism, that are also shared by postcolonial critics, including the celebration of multiplicity and equality, the rejection of binarity, polarization and hierarchies, the critique of western-centrism, and focusing on emancipation. These particular features are employed in the discussion of the portrayal of the nonwestern interpreter in Nesin's story because they are profoundly political.

Late developments in literary theory and the philosophy of language, particularly views which raise doubts about the previously held theories of interpretation have helped expand and shape translation studies towards the end of the twentieth century. From the 1970s onward, literary theory and later translation were overwhelmed by beliefs which challenged if not outruled some approaches of textual and formalistic analysis including theories of the New Critics and structuralism which hold that "texts possessed some kind of objective existence and could, therefore, be studied and analyzed, with appropriate conclusions to follow from such analyses" (Bressler 2011, 87). The postmodernist views that "no such thing as *the* meaning -or, especially the *correct* meaning- of the aesthetic text exists" (Bressler 2011, 88), and that meaning and truth are "subjective, perspectival, dependent on social, cultural, and personal influences" (Bressler 2011, 88) allowed for an infinite number of well-grounded interpretations including multiple translations of the same original.

The postmodernist maxims of multiplicity of meaning and undecidability in interpretation can be understood politically and philosophically as they pertain to the emancipation of readers, critical interpreters, and translators from the authority of the text. These maxims have problematized the New Critics' emphasis on the "close scrutiny or close reading of a text" as well as the "autotelic" nature of the text (Bressler 2011, 70), which suggests that "one correct interpretation of a text could be discovered if critical readers follow the prescribed methodologies" (Bressler 2011, 197). Derrida's counterargument through his famous dictum "*il n'y a pas de hors-texte,*" which proposes that the text becomes stable only in context, liberated readers (also translators) from the confines of the text based on the view that meaning is continually "in a flux" (Bressler 2011, 88) and is not entirely textual or fixed but rather "sliding, abyssal, undecidable" (Leitch *et al.* 2001, 21).

To the postmodern critic, "the reader (and similarly the translator) acquires the status of authorship," and the original text generates a multiplicity of interpretations each of which becomes a master narrative and continues to generate other interpretations and texts including translations: "the Ursprung (origin) and its coming into being are one and the same. These texts constitute a palimpsest of never-ending stories that unfold other stories as one single narrative is constructed and interpreted" (Torres Cruz 2014, 1-2). Poststructuralists' focusing on the "floating signifiers, rhetoricity, intertextuality," the "decentering of the subject," and their "stress on difference" have problematized all "traditional mimetic, expressive, didactic, and formalist theories" (Leitch *et al*. 2001, 21) and emancipated interpretation from tradition and the restraints of the text. This problematization with its stress on multiplicity and emancipation has

become a strong underpinning for a multiplicity of other theories including postcolonialism and translation studies.

The postm**o**dernist incredulity towards the decidability of interpretation which is a "hallmark of Derrida's and Paul de Man's deconstruction," along with Roland Barthes poststructuralist ideas on "the 'death of the author,' which explicitly disconnects the text from any grounding in authorial intention or psychology" (Leitch *et al.* 2001, 21) extended to translation driving critics to rethink traditionalist approaches to translation which restrict and confine translators. To the postmodern translation theorist, the principles of equivalence, fluency, transparency, and faithfulness are prescribed based on beliefs in the decidability of the original, therefore, they cannot be enforced as constitutional norms. Álvarez and Vidal (1996) point out "it is no longer possible, therefore, to speak of a textual translation; rather, the context should always be born in mind" on the grounds that "nothing has meaning 'in isolation'" (3), and language cannot be separated from politics, history, and context.

Some translation theorists went so far to the extent of rejecting the classical codes of equivalence and fidelity because they are symmetrical and dwell on the assumption that the source text holds a definite objective truth and a fixed meaning to which the translation must be compared and equated. Venuti considers fidelity "abusive" of translators and calls for "an opposing strategy" or "resistancy" (1992, 12). Arrojo asserts that "there exist no stable meanings in the original text to be faithful to in the process of translation or interpretation" (quoted in Gao 2020, 388). Similarly, Simon (2005) contends "if there is no primary meaning to be discovered, if translation is not in thrall to a deep and distant truth, where is fidelity to be grounded?" (11). Also, Chamberlain criticizes Gilles Menáge's notorious metaphor Les Belles Infidèles and his sexist comparison of translations to women who can be either faithful or beautiful, but not both. She says in an attempt to free translation from this conflict that is based on symmetrical approaches, "fidelity is defined by an implicit contract between translation as (woman) and original (as husband, father, or author). However, the infamous 'double standard' operates here as it might have in traditional marriages: the 'unfaithful' wife/ translation is publicly tied for crimes the husband/original is by law incapable of committing" (1992, 58).

In addition to fidelity, there has been a rethinking of the principle of equivalence which dominated the practice of translation from the early history of translation until the middle of twentieth century. Equivalence "has certainly been questioned," Pym maintains, by "the instability of the 'source,'" that is treating original texts not as "stable points of departure to which any translation could be considered equivalent" (2010, 91), but as "another step in an endless sequence of transformations" (Pym 2014, 87) through which "meaning can only point to an indefinite number of other meanings" (Guerin *et al.* 2005, 377). Such inferences constituted a logical premise for the defense of translation and translators in the late twentieth century and onward.

Postmodern translation theorists have criticized rigorously traditionalist views which call for equivalence and fidelity while transferring the text from one language into another. Arrojo (2004) justifies her attack on symmetrical approaches by saying they are behind the translators' invisibility: "The call for faithfulness and invisibility" are "typically associated with traditional translation theories and practices"

(32). Defenders of translators like Arrojo are influenced by the views of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida "who are skeptical" that language "can mirror reality." They believe in intertextuality, "that facts are simply interpretations" of other interpretations, and "that truth is not absolute," but subjective, and is "merely the construct of individual groups" (Barrett 1997, 18). Regardless of their "heavy emphasis on theory over practical criticism" (Guerin *et al*. 2005, 378), such views have liberated translators by relieving them from the shackles of sameness of meaning, transparency, and blind fidelity which have, for so long, made translation arduous and demanding and imprisoned the translator within the confines of textual meaning. They have deemed the job of translation to be neither attractive nor desired when compared to authorship. The complexity and futility of traditionalist approaches to translations are reflected in Dryden's famous metaphor about translation, "dancing on ropes with fettered legs" (quoted in Snell-Hornby 2006, 10). To the postmodern critic, fidelity, fluency, equivalence and all symmetrical approaches should be treated as special cases rather than constitutional norms enforced on any act of translation.

The intersection between postmodernism, postcolonial theory, and theories of translation following the cultural turn of the 1990s includes in addition to beliefs in multiplicity and the undecidability of interpretation the rejection of theories of binarism adopted originally by Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Roman Jakobson, particularly their treatment of "language as a self-enclosed system based on binary oppositions" (Bressler 2011, 102). Originally, doubts were cast by deconstructionists as a result of Derrida's critical writings on Saussure's view of language as "a rule-bound structure or system of oppositions and differences," and on Saussure's thought that "words can be defined by contrasting them with what they are not" in addition to Jakobson's "analysis of the tendency of binary oppositions to fall into 'marked/unmarked' pairs" (Leitch *et al*. 2001, 1255). Following these developments, various ideological re-evaluations of binary structures began to exceed the linguistic spheres to lay bare all problematic hierarchical relations across various cultural, social, economic, political and postcolonial contexts. Notably, the postmodern and postcolonial rejection of binary relations of power has become a major theme in translation theory following the cultural turn. A good illustration is how Spivak's postcolonial feminist article "Translation and Politics," (2000) attempts to deconstruct western feminist centrism through translation. Spivak criticizes the hierarchal political relationship between western and nonwestern feminists saying that there is a feeling of supremacy embedded in western feminists' understanding of solidarity because they always expect nonwestern women to speak, write, and translate in the 'hegemonic' languages. According to her, learning the language of 'the other' is the best way to measure solidarity while the insistence on translation into English is a kind of "betrayal of the democratic ideal into the law of the strongest" (400).

Both postmodernism and postcolonialism adopt similar ways of representation that stress equality and the deconstruction of centrism and binary relations. Salhi (2020) contends in his book *Postmodern and Postcolonial Intersections* that both movements "apply several theories of innovation, renovation, or change that allow them to go beyond the static conservatism characteristic of imperialist culture and its totalizing systems of representation" (1). Translation theory following the cultural turn shares this

postmodern and postcolonial craving for equality, renovation, and change as Cronin (2006) maintains "if the conventional relationship between words and reality is changed, then translation acquires wholly new powers. Now words in translation can shape our vision of the real and cause us to experience reality differently" (105).

The rejection of binarism by postmodernist and postcolonial critics has drawn the attention to how structuralist theories of translation have, for so long, constructed binary oppositions indicating a conflict between two extremes when thinking about translation such as the dichotomies free/literal, beautiful/faithful, translator/writer, and the original vs. translation. These binaries or "violent oppositions," as Kruger (2004, 14) describes them, have been widely accepted and promoted for decades. Simon points out "it is by destroying the absolutes of polarity that we can advance in our understanding of social and literary relations" (2005, 12). The critique of polarization and binarity in translation evolved out of Derrida's criticism of the western desire for establishing an "ultimate reality or center of truth that can serve as the basis for all our thoughts and actions" (Bressler 2011, 110). On this basis, postmodernists in translation rejected binary comparisons between the translator and the original author and the view of the source and target cultures and "the source and target texts as sets of structures" (Pym 2010, 66) quite unequal in status; the former being original and central (an urtext) and the latter a peripheral and unsatisfactory imitation or simulacrum of the original. Koskinen describes this line of thinking as a "paralyzing" hierarchy in which "the original text and its author are placed on the upper level and the translation and the other second-hand interpretations and interpreters on the lower" (1994, 447). Such unfair comparisons promote false theoretical assumptions, particularly the eternal power and dominance of the original author and text over translation and translators and keep the translator invisible like the transparent viewfoils used to make a projection.

The interaction between translation and the politics of postmodernism and postcolonial theory has tremendously impacted how translation is viewed and practiced. Various postmodern principles which are adopted by postcolonial critics because they stress emancipation, multiplicity, difference, and equality are now used by translation theorists to empower translators and deconstruct power relations whether linguistic, cultural, or political between the translation and the original. The politically oriented perspectives, as will be shown in this article, can be employed in the improvement of the sociology of translators and in revolutionizing views on the relation between the author and translator. The possible outcome would be similar to the viewpoint of the Mexican poet, Pedro Serrano, who acknowledges the translator as a creative writer being no less important than the original author. He believes with great positivity in the liberation of translators saying that both his poems and their translations by Anna Crowe are endless processes of transformation that need not be symmetrical:

> For me, your translations are your immersion in these poems, and in this immersion, while the poems don't cease to be mine, they also belong to you. […] you have made them yours, come from you, adapted by you, and put on the table with your words, yours, not mine. And it is only after you have passed them round that I can come back and re-claim them, make them mine too, in a strange reverse movement, first

> as reader of your poem, then as author of that reading and only finally as author once more of that poem, transmuted into those words […] poetry really exists, always transmuting itself, and belongs to nobody, and belongs to us all. (Interview, 2014)

Serrano's inspirational view suggests that negative beliefs such as the 'superiority' of the author and the 'inferiority' of the translator have given way to more encouraging views supporting translators in their position and drawing the attention to significant issues such as the relatively low socio-economic status of translators and their "marginality in academia" (Venuti 2003), in addition to the academic "homelessness" of translation studies or scarcity of independent academic departments for translation around the world (see Pym 1999, 35-51).

Following these fertile connections between translation and political mindsets of the postmodernism, and postcolonialism, theorists were grouped into two camps of thought, namely essentialist translation theorists including Nida, Newmark, Neubert, and Catford among others who defended textual analysis in translation, and the principles of equivalence and faithfulness, versus nonessentialist theorists such as Lawrence Venuti and Rosemary Arrojo who based their ideas on postmodern theories to promote the view of the translator as a creative writer. Nonessentialist theories in translation examine how essentialist theorists subordinate translators by emphasizing symmetrical approaches and by establishing binaries when theorizing about translation. For instance, in talking about the inevitable loss of meaning and the inability of translation to amount to the original, Nida (2000) quotes Rossetti who reduces translation to a commentary saying: "A translation remains perhaps the most direct form of commentary" (126). Essentialist theories of translation, similar to the New Critics, "warn against the heresy of paraphrase" (Leitch *et al.* 2001, 19) that is the multiplicity of interpretations. They judge translations based on their strict closeness to the originals ignoring the layers of meaning, so to speak, coming through context, history, or reference. Conversely, nonessentialist theorists do not take among their chief concerns the quality or assessment of translations and focus on how to improve the way we practice and think about translation by erasing boundaries and hierarchies between authorship and the translation.

Kruger maintains that "with regard to the theory of translation, deconstruction forces us to break with conventional logocentric approaches to translation that are necessarily directed inward, towards the source text and some metaphysical notion of meaning" (2004, 22). Accordingly, researchers and critics have become alert to the negative portrayal of translators in literary texts, movies, and the media. Simon sums up this portrayal by saying: "translators, as cultural and economic intermediaries, are often members of marginalized groups. Historically, they occupy socially fragile positions," standing "on the fringes of power" (2000, 12-13). Similarly, Arrojo aligns translators with subaltern groups whose agencies are denied:

> If asymmetrical relations of power have established that authorship,
> patriarchy and colonialism do have a lot in common, by the same token,
> the devoted interpreter's or translator's plight may be comparable not
> only to the woman's (Chamberlain 1992), but also to that of the subject

of colonization. (2002, 142)

The focus on the marginalization of translators and the complicity of traditionalist approaches in that marginalization opened possibilities for a re-examination and re-evaluation of the status of translators and their portrayal in culture. Nonessentialist translation theorists such as the prominent experts on the subject of translation and power, Lori Chamberlain, and Rosemary Arrojo, have re-read translators in literature and highlighted the representation of them in literary texts. The investigation of the portrayal of translators and their work in culture can wipe out biased thinking about translation inherent in western and nonwestern cultures. It can deconstruct negative views similar to Thomas Hogg's mistrust of poetry translation as he compares it to "gluing a sheet of paper over a statue" (qtd. in Webb 1976, 28). Such views reflect the impractical search for an ultimate translation that can match the 'eternal' source text; because ironically it is believed that "the 'original' is eternal and the translation dates" (Venuti 1992, 3).

In light of the postmodernist rethinking of translation which revolutionized translation studies and opened doors for connections with other theories including postcolonialism, the current work discusses a special case of social, political, and cultural inequality using modern Turkish fiction, postcolonialism, and postmodern theory. Simon (2000) argues that "it is not surprising that much of the work on power and ideology in translation has come out of postcolonial contexts, like India, Canada, Ireland or Brazil, and has been sustained by theoretical currents like feminism and Poststructuralism" (12). Thoughts on translation in this work are evoked by the postcolonial context of the story and are supported by the views of nonessentialist translation theorists including Sherry Simon, Lori Chamberlain, Lawrence Venuti, Rosemary Arrojo, and Michael Cronin, among others.

Translation is viewed as a political act when it evokes issues of power, control, and hierarchy such as in colonial and postcolonial settings. Munday (2016) argues that "the linking of colonization and translation" by postcolonialist thinkers including Spivak "is accompanied by the argument that translation has played an active role in the colonization process and in disseminating an ideologically motivated image of colonized peoples" (210). Álvarez and Vidal (1996) believe that translation can "become a form of control, particularly if there are already a series of preconceived stereotypes about a given culture" (3). Likewise, Mona Baker (2006) believes, "translation and interpreting participate in shaping the way in which conflict unfolds in a number of ways" (2). In this work, Nesin's satirical story "Don't you Have Any Donkey's in Your Country?" is used to show how the strategies of translation imposed by a westerner on a Turkish interpreter reflect supremacy and ethnocentrism towards nonwestern peoples including native interpreters.

Even though Turkey was never a colonized country, Mehrvand and Khorsandi (2018) argue that Nesin's selected story can be discussed under postcolonial theory on grounds of "socio-political similarities between Turkey and colonized countries" (31). There are valid reasons which make the postcolonial reading of this literary piece understandable. First, there is an encounter in the story between an ethnocentric westerner and the natives of a nonwestern country, which to a great extent, resembles encounters often investigated under postcolonial theory to understand issues of power and otherness. Second, a central character in the story is a western merchant and famous writer; "an American of

German extraction, and he probably had some Jewish background too. Perhaps he had been a German Jew and become an American later on" (Nesin 1998, 102). He displays an ethnocentric behavior similar to the attitude of colonists and imperialists who carried negative stereotypes about colonized and nonwestern peoples. He is an oriental-rug collector who travels across Middle Eastern and Asian countries to look for antique hand-made carpets owned by poor peasants and purchases them at few dollars to sell them in his country at an excessive price: "He seemed very happy with the pieces he had collected. He told me they were an enormous treasure" (Nesin 1998, 101). Mehrvand and Khorsandi (2018) maintain that "the relationship between the American and the Turk is similar to that of the colonizer/oppressor and the colonized/oppressed" (39). In his encounters with the peasants, for instance, the western merchant presumes that the Turks are so naïve and so primitive to the point that they do not understand the value of oriental carpets in the west; thus he can outwit them effortlessly: "'I got this for fifty cents,' he said and chuckled slyly in his delight. 'This felt rug will be worth at least five thousand dollars'" (Nesin 1998, 102). He is very proud of his deceptive "methods" which he has employed for forty years in dealing with the poor locals: "He told me tactics that made my mouth fall open in amazement" (Nesin 1998, 102). He narrates one incident of which he seems very proud after purchasing "a piece of an old carpet only three inches wide and five or ten inches long" from an Iranian peasant at one dollar only; he tells the narrator sarcastically: "when the poor Iranian peasant took the dinar equivalent of a dollar in his hand, he was dumbfounded and uttered prayers of thanksgiving" (Nesin 1998, 102). The American profiteer made a fortune out of the exploitation and deception of many nonwestern peasants in Turkey, India, Iran, Afghanistan, and Chinese Turkestan. "He had published three books on rugs, in addition, he owned one of the finest rug collections in the world" (Nesin 1998, 102).

In the story, the capitalist merchant does not only take advantage of nonwestern poor peasants, but he also travels across villages looking for antique carpets in the company of a Turkish professor who acts also as his interpreter to help in the deceitful bargains with the locals. In their touring across the country, the American merchant and the native interpreter encounter a peasant resting under a tree and a donkey with an old rug on its back beside him. With the assistance of his interpreter, the merchant tries hard to purchase the rug at a cheap price. He was careful not to show the Turk his strong interest in the rug; therefore, he tells his submissive interpreter to convince the man of selling him the donkey so at the end he can obtain the carpet for free. "Be careful that the man doesn't understand that what we are really after is the piece of carpet" (Nesin 1998, 105). From a postcolonial perspective, the American merchant's keen interest in the old Turkish rug is reminiscent of the attitude of the nineteenth-century orientalists and their interest in the Orient and its alleged 'exotic' chattels. In the story, the westerner speaks about oriental carpets "with a truly sensual longing" (Nesin 1998, 102). Kadoi (2013) maintains that oriental carpets "acquired a special symbolic status in the West as a true manifestation of material culture or exotic, native, primitive and nomadic pastoral cultural practices of the mysterious Orient …" (256).

In the story, the peasant realizes that the westerner is trying to deceive him with the compliance and submission of the interpreter and plans to outsmart the two of them. At their insistence, he agrees on selling the donkey for two thousand and five hundred Turkish liras, i.e., about one hundred and eighty-

five US dollars; however, he keeps the rug after he receives the money saying he was told they want the donkey and have not said a word about the rug. This has left the American speechless and the interpreter very shameful reproaching himself: "Damn it, I've been disgraced. I've been disgraced" (Nesin 1998, 101). Unexpectedly, the interpreter's deeply felt shame does not come out of regret because of his dishonorable role in the attempt of trickery; rather, he tells the narrator in the story, who gets really surprised, that he feels disgraced because the deal to get the carpet for free not only failed, but was also disastrous for the American merchant who is also a successful writer as the Turk sold him "a broken down, mangy donkey for two thousand five hundred liras" (Nesin 1998, 101).

Nesin's humorous story is inherently political criticizing western-centrism, the abuse of power, and imperial attitudes towards nonwestern cultures and peoples. The immoral conduct of the capitalist merchant is representative of the exploitation of colonized countries. His burning ambition to collect oriental carpets from nonwestern peasants and resell them at a higher price resembles, to a great extent, the capitalist ambitions of the empire to extract the riches of its colonies. Embedded within the criticism of imperialism in Nesin's story is the unattractive portrayal of the native translator as a dominated colonial subject who mimics and assimilates the values of the westerner irrespective of being ethical or not. He submits completely and blindly to his western employer who looks at all Middle Eastern people through the same colonial prism. The interpreter's exaggerated conformity resembles the domination of colonial subjects and mimic men even though he is originally an accomplished eloquent professor at Istanbul University and provides the westerner with the very vital service of communicating and bargaining with the local peasants. He becomes hysterical and shameful upon the failure of the deceitful deal because he let the American author and merchant down. From a postcolonial perspective, his disgrace stems from his colonial mentality, and of his internalized feeling of cultural and ethnic inferiority:

> The Turkish professor begins and ends his story, frequently slapping his hand and forehead, repeating "I am disgraced." The narrator is both surprised and curious. Twice the Turkish professor tells the anonymous narrator that he felt so because in his presence 'they sold a man a broken down, mangy donkey for two thousand five hundred liras.' (Mehrvand and Khorsandi 2018, 39)

The voicelessness and marginalization of the interpreter which may be contrasted with his volubility, eloquence, and high status as a university professor, attract the attention to the fragile position of postcolonial interpreters who work on the frontlines of conflicts, and in high-pressure settings intermediating between conflicting groups and are demanded to be blindly faithful regardless of all conditions. Nesin is a writer who "seeks to give literary expression to a sense of protest against social inequality and rightlessness" (Rzayev and Hasanova 2017, 57). His disturbing, yet realistic portrayal of the subjugation of the interpreter suggests the author's concern about translators who are not esteemed or protected especially those at the frontiers of conflicts.

The popularity of Aziz Nesin is believed to be linked relatively to his stance against the authorities in Turkey and his imprisonment on charges of nonconformity and atheism. Admittedly, he had "struck a

chord with his relentlessly black humour" (Pinar 2020, para. 5) and "attracted public attention with his critical approach and his unusually sharp perception of Turkish society and culture" (Pinar 2020, para. 2). Nesin wrote more than a hundred poems, novels, short stories, plays, and essays most of which are political and are translated into more than forty languages. He gave marginalized people in his country and elsewhere "a voice through his unflinching satire" (Pinar 2020, para. 2) by vocalizing their suppression and silence into powerful words. Nesin's most popular themes reflect a deep anxiety about all forms of the misuse of power. A case in point is his satirical story "Don't You Have Any Donkeys in Your Country?" which exposes various forms of suppression and exploitation. The present article reveals an unexplored form of abuse stressing how translators and interpreters, particularly those working in intense political climates, make no exception from this author's "fervent defence of freedom and equality" (Pinar 2020, para. 4).

Part of the postmodern translation theory's criticism of the earlier theories is how they have inscribed unglamourous images about translators in the minds of many including translators themselves. In his essay of 1821, "A Defence of Poetry," the English poet, Percy Shelley, romanticizes poetry as "the light of life; the source of whatever beautiful or generous or true" (42), "the root and blossom of all other systems of thought," "the odor and color of the rose to the texture of the elements which compose it" (61). On the other hand, Shelley stresses the failure of translation to match the original saying that, while poetry "lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world" (32), his own translations of poetry are merely "the gray veil" that is going to blur the "perfect and glowing" original (28)."Veil after veil may be undrawn," Shelley contends, and the inmost naked beauty of the meaning never exposed" (54). Disturbingly, translators are surrounded by negative images about their profession such as when translation is viewed as "the footprint" of the original (Koskinen, 1994, 449), or when it is seen as a "painting" and the originals as "models of painters" (Arrojo 2018, 165). In the same respect, Chamberlain (1992) criticizes the metaphor Les Belles Infidèles because it sexualizes translation by considering authorship "original and 'masculine'," and translation "derivative and 'feminine'" (57). All these disturbing views which idolize the original author and belittle translators are expressed in many literary texts in very believable ways and reflect biased views against translators embedded in wider cultures. In his book *Translation and Identity*, which explores how translation can be valuable in promoting equality, difference, and cross-cultural communication, Cronin (2006) investigates "the practices of translation and interpreting in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England and Ireland and their role in the political and military conflicts" (94). He laments the portrayal of the interpreter in Shakespeare's play *Henry VI*, part 2 as "a linguistic double agent" (99) saying that similar to all postcolonial interpreters, Lord Say was "thrust into the role of translator by the expansionist drive of the English Crown" (99). Despite his extreme fidelity to King Henry the sixth during the political conflict with France, he is executed on grounds of "suspicion of the trustworthiness" of his translation. He is mistakenly accused of "double dealing" through translation (97) and is thought to have led to the big losses of the English Crown in France. Lord Say's subordination and portrayal as a traitor in the play are typical of the vulnerable status of translators who work in postcolonial settings and their unfair representation in culture.

In Nesin's story, which was first published in a collection of short stories entitled *Turkish Stories from Four Decades* (1991) translated into English by Louis Mitler, the subordination of the local interpreter is displayed in a number of ways. From a postcolonial perspective, he is dominated similar to the colonized subjects, and his exploitation resembles that of the colonies during the colonial rule. From a deconstructive perspective which devalues binaries, he is a marginalized and invisible interpreter contrasted with a resourceful western writer. His double subordination is manifested through the association of the merchant with power, capitalism, the west, and with authorship, whereas the interpreter is associated with a 'third-world' country and with the socially and academically 'marginalized' profession of translation. Such problematic yet illuminating representation is a critique of power relations which is the main contribution of the story. Nesin's story reveals a special case of social, political, and cultural inequality which fits within his broader concerns over human rights and his wishes for "self-determination, integrity, and equal opportunities and equality for all" (Pinar 2020, para. 11). The fact that "Nesin resisted all forms of authoritarianism" (Pinar 2020, para. 11) makes the investigation of the subordination the Turkish interpreter practical and clear. In fact, it is reasonable to think that the political author actually meant to align translators with subaltern groups especially after knowing that Nesin felt intimidated as a translator. He stated he received death threats on the accusation of spreading anti-Islam views in his books, in particular, after translating Salman Rushdie's controversial novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988), which ridicules many significant beliefs of Islam. He survived an attack during a symposium in Sivas, Turkey in which other Turkish writers, including Asım Bezirci and Nesimi Çimen were killed. Considering these facts, the investigation of the double subordination of the interpreter in the story becomes worthwhile.

The political representation of the interpreter explored by the article can be further illustrated with the notions of "hegemony," "hybridity," and "mimicry" often employed in discussions of issues in colonial and postcolonial settings. Simon (2000) maintains that postcolonialism offers a "*global dimension* of research in translation studies," it is "the framework through which we understand *power relations* and *relations of alterity*" (13). Garane (2015) distinguishes between two types of African interpreters who work "in the employ of the colonizer" in the French colonies. He condemns the native interpreter who is "nothing but a compliant servant," and praises the "trickster figure" who shaped "the colonial knowledge and politics" (26) and "controlled and manipulated the flow of information between colonial administrators, customary chiefs and colonized subjects." Garane argues that the second type is important and influential whether or not he betrays his own people: "I demonstrate that the interpreter in these works is often a trickster figure who is never entirely "faithful" to his "own" people nor to the colonizer, and that this 'infidelity is ironically constitutive of agency, whether 'ethical' or not" (2). Both of Garane's characterizations are problematic because they reflect the binary thinking of fidelity vs. betrayal. To view translation as such is harmful to translators. Cronin points out that "the localness of the interpreter, which is perceived as a linguistic, cultural and 'intelligence' asset, is also that which makes the interpreter uniquely vulnerable to the political pressures of the locale" (2006, 116). In just the same

way, an Iraqi interpreter comments on the vulnerability of native interpreters who are targeted by the locals for their fidelity to the US military and betrayal of their own people saying:

> In Fallujah [a central city in the Iraqi American conflict] I faced death many times, just like U.S. soldiers," he said. "Many 'terps [industry speak for 'interpreters'] were killed and injured, some of them were threatened so theyleft their work, others were kidnapped then were killed by militias because they were accused of being traitors. (Smith 2015)

In postcolonial settings, translation is not always glorious; it is traumatic, as Cronin (2000) believes, for "making the origin travel, sharing, fragmenting and multiplying the space of origin is continually shadowed by the lingering guilt of duplicity, treason and betrayal" (48). The Turkish translator is a hybrid who with his "twin evils of nativism and essentialism," (Cronin 2000, 48) can't fight back his double colonization reinforced by his blindly faithful interpreting for the westerner and his betrayal of his fellow natives. Niranjana (1992) believes that "in post-colonial context the problematic of translation becomes a significant site for raising questions of representation, power, and historicity" (1). In Nesin's story, the setting is ideal for exploring the subordination and vulnerability of postcolonial interpreters. The native interpreter is voiceless, marginal, and totally suppresses his identity to serve the western profiteer regardless of the latter's opportunistic behavior, deep self-interest, capitalist exploitation, and colonial stereotyping of the nonwestern peasants. Even with the immorality of this behavior, the indigenous interpreter maintains an unswerving faithfulness to the westerner while undermining his national identity. The American merchant, on the other hand, is hegemonic manipulating his interpreter and acting as a capitalist colonist. He uses his position as a citizen from a western country (and also as the speaker who directs and dominates the interpreter) to keep the indigenous interpreter under control in pursuit of his capitalist interests. Cronin (2000) argues that "while colonial administrators considered interpreters to be their 'agents,' they also mistrusted them and were often preoccupied with controlling and assuring their loyalty" (43). The Turk is the westerner's tour guide and interpreter without whom he is not able to pursue his capitalist interests, yet he is mistrusted by his employer who keeps telling him: "Don't let on anything" (Nesin 1998, 105), and the latter complies without any complaints whatsoever. To him, the perfect principles for interpreting are equivalence and fidelity. Nonessentialist translation theorists have studied the marginality and stereotyping of translators and concluded that this can be attributed to the insistence of practitioners and theorists for a long time even in most of twentieth century on the much-popularized principles of equivalence, faithfulness, and binarity which were interrupted by the cultural turn in translation theories. Chamberlain (1992) argues that establishing codes and rules for translation sustains the hierarchal relation between languages, cultures and between translation and the original: "the reason translation is so overcoded, so overregulated, is that it threatens to erase the difference between production and reproduction which is essentialist to the establishment of power" (66-67). The Turkish interpreter's fidelity and complete identification with the westerner bring about his marginalization and invisibility. Worse still, his methods of translation can be seen as negative "mimicry," a concept Homi Bhabha used to describe the colonial subjects' imitation and copying of their dominant colonizers'

attitude, language, or culture while suppressing their cultural identity. His faithfulness, in particular, is disgraceful; it is in fact covert duplicity and compliance, for which he may be derided as a mimic man, especially when compared to his fellow natives who chose to fight back the colonial stereotyping and not give the American profiteer an opportunity to meet his goals of deception. The fact that the local peasant outsmarts the western merchant and reverses the stereotypes of natural naivety and simplemindedness, while the interpreter remains regulated and controlled by the westerner is an indication that translators are marginalized under the widely accepted codes of faithfulness and equivalence, which can be described as hegemonic strategies in postcolonial contexts.

Postcolonial theorists examine issues of translation from western languages into nonwestern ones or vice versa on the premise that there are colonial attitudes embedded in the strategies and methods applied in the practice of translation. The story reveals a sharp binary between westerners and their native interpreters who usually risk their cultural and social positions to work in high-pressure settings to do the vital services of translating and interpreting. Bassnett and Lefevere believe that "like all (re)writings/ [translation] is never innocent" (quoted in Álvarez and Vidal 1996, 7). In light of the postcolonial context of the story, the practice of translation through equivalence and fidelity regardless of the dishonesty of the American writer reflects his imperialism. Simon (2000) believes that translators have in fact played a big role in constructing the relation between colonizers and their colonized peoples it "was part of the violence, then," she writes, "through which the colonial subject was constructed" (11). According to Venuti, translation based on the theories of the dynamic equivalence and domestication is violence and even imperialism and has bound translators to an eclipse; he maintains that "the dynamically equivalent translation is, 'interlingual communication' which overcomes the linguistic and cultural differences that impede it, […] an imperialist appropriation of a foreign text" (1996, 204).

The American merchant takes necessary measures to keep the native interpreter invisible and under control. His insistence on transparency and blind faithfulness in translation reflects his ethnocentrism. Interpreting as such fulfils the merchant's capitalist desire to trick and exploit the peasants, and the native interpreter is merely a *bridge* taken control of to meet this desire. Postmodernist translation theorists call for a rethinking of the classical theories and definitions of translation. For example, the metaphor which identifies translation as a *bridge* between cultures is not seen as innocent at all by postcolonial critics. Ruano (2021) believes that treating translation as a *bridge* has brought nothing but "facilitating invasion, conquest, or subjugation of territories and communities if translations and bridges were taken control of and used by colonizing people or occupying forces" (337). Such preconceptions and metaphors are not harmless. They influence how translators are treated and viewed. In postcolonial and political settings they leave interpreters vulnerable acting as mimic men always seeking the guidance and protection of their western employers similar to thousands of Iraqi and Afghan interpreters for instance who, after the completion of their interpreting missions, became political asylum seekers in western countries to escape any persecution or pursuit in their home countries.

Among the chief concerns of translation theory following the cultural turn is to explore how literature and literary theory can be used to search for new strategies in translation and to extend the

horizons of theory. Considerable work has been done under postmodern theories especially deconstruction to rethink translation by studying unappealing representations of translators in fiction. Engaging literature and literary theory with the study of translation improves the status of translators as Arrojo points out "fictional representations of the work of translators will shine a special, often unexpected light on the scene of translation as an asymmetrical encounter between different languages, interests, and perspectives" (2018, 1). By describing translation as "asymmetrical," Arrojo launches an attack on theories of equivalence and sameness of meaning, which to her, have bound translators for so long to a wild goose chase and to inferiority. Even though Arrojo has been described as "far more radical and sweeping" in her "theorization of translation" (Pym 2007, 38) without providing any reconciliation with the older theories, she has popularized the view of translators as creative writers. In other words, even though approaches to translation, which reject equivalence and fidelity, are thought to be too theoretical, and as Britto (2011) believes, "quite incapable of proposing viable alternatives" (7) when challenging the widely held views of equivalence and all symmetrical approaches, they have improved the sociology of translators and drawn the attention to issues of inequality and hierarchy embedded in thinking about translation. More so than anything else, deconstructionists in translation have theorized on the inevitable 'marginality' of translation compared to the 'originality" of authorship. They stress that the translator's arduous chase after equivalence and symmetry is futile and will only "compose a more thorough portrait of the translator's often repressed or veiled agency" (Arrojo 2018, 24) reflected so clearly, as shown through this article, in the voicelessness and marginalization of the Turkish interpreter in Nesin's postcolonial story.

Conclusion

Sherry Simon (2000) maintains that "postcolonial contexts heighten awareness that translations are solicited and exchanged according to rules of trade and ownership, which are both commercial and ideological" (13). The Turkish story, "Don't You Have Any Donkeys in Your Country?" is employed to show this particular manipulation of interpreters in postcolonial contexts. The political writer Aziz Nesin usually "presents as his hero the man in the street beleaguered by the inimical forces of modern life" (Halman 2007, 100) and in this particular piece, a Turkish eloquent university professor becomes secondary and subordinate after he is driven to work as an interpreter for a western merchant and writer who insists authoritatively that the interpreter practices translation through the principles of blind fidelity and equivalence. Cronin (2006) stresses the importance of studying representations of translators in culture and literature saying that "if we want to understand how translators and interpreters are seen to function in cultures and societies, it seems legitimate to investigate not only actual working conditions, rates of pay and training or educational opportunities for the profession but also the manner in which they are represented in cultural or imaginary artefacts" (116). Literary texts and the media abound with negative representations of translators and interpreters as duplicitous, as mimic men, copy machines, or colonized subjects, especially in postcolonial settings often associating the original author with a powerful imperial culture or with masculinity. Such characterization reflects inherent persistent views that

adversely affect the socio-economic status of translators across different cultures east and west. In fact, deconstructive analyses of discourses that internalize such negative images about the role of the translator are gaining ground in translation studies. Bassnett maintains that "the key word in the 90s is 'visibility.' Today translation is a process in which intervention is crucial; the role of the translator is 'very visible' indeed" (quoted in Álvarez and Vidal 1996, 6-7). Such analyses can change the way we think about and practice translation. Hopefully, the deconstruction of the negative characterization of translators, conducted through the lens of postmodern and postcolonial theory, breaks ground for a reinterpretation of the translator's role in society to counter views which accept binaries and assert the devaluation of translation and the primacy of authorship for the interaction between translation and the philosophies of literary theories has for sure shifted the focus in translation from the authoritative prescriptions of equivalence, fidelity, and transparency to the ethical issues of the (in)visibility of translators, and to their confinement and emancipation.

الترجمة وانعدام السيادة في ظل ما بعد الكولونياليّة

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الملخص

تناقش هذه الدراسة مهمة المترجم في سياق ما بعد الكولونياليّة من خلال توظيف قصةٍ قصيرةٍ للكاتب التركي الساخر عزيز نيسين بعنوان "Sizin Memlekette Eşek Yok Mu؟" [أليس لديكم أي حميرٍ في بلدكم؟] وذلك لإلقاء الضوء على المكانة الاجتماعيّة والسياسيّة الراهنة للمترجم غير الغربي تحت تأثير الإمبرياليّة. وتسلط الدراسة الضوء على تهميش مترجمٍ فوريٍّ تركيٍّ يعمل في خدمة تاجرٍ أميركي عنصري يجمع البسط والسجاد الشرقي كتمثيلٍ رمزيٍ للعلاقة بين ما يسمى دول "العالم النامي" والدول الإمبريالية، وتستعين الدراسة ببعض المفاهيم ذات الصلة من نظريات ما بعد الاستعمار الثقافيّة بما في ذلك مفهومي التقليد الأعمى والهيمنة لتوضيح العلاقة القطبيّة بين المؤلف/ والمترجم. وتناقش الدراسة أيضًا كيف ترتبط قضيّة تغييب المترجم وتهميشه التي جرى بحثها على نطاقٍ واسعٍ في نظريات الترجمة الغربيّة بمبادئ جوهريّة في الترجمة كالتكافؤ والتفاني في مطابقة الترجمة مع النص الأصلي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: عزيز نيسين، نظريات الترجمة ما بعد الاستعماريّة، الإمبرياليّة، المترجم والتهميش، الترجمة والتماثل مع النص الأصلي، ثنائيّة المترجم /المؤلف.

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