

# TURKISH WOMEN WRITERS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Arzu Akbatur

Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir, Turkey

## Abstract

The present paper aims to present a brief survey of Turkish women writers in English translation. Due to the dominant position of English, Turkey has been rather dependent on translations from this language and the flow of translations into the opposite direction has been quite slow. Yet, there is a considerable increase in the number of translations from Turkish into English especially since the 1980s. This also holds true for the works of women writers, and, of women's fiction in particular, which is closely related to the bond between writing and women's increased consciousness. The paper also briefly touches upon issues such as what has not been translated and why, and the role translators play in the recognition and dissemination of works from a 'minor' language. A sample of writers and information about their works in English translation are presented in order to reveal, if not completely, the diverse nature of Turkish women's writing.

## Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Arbeit bietet eine bündige Untersuchung von Werken türkischer Schriftstellerinnen und deren Übersetzungen ins Englische. Abhängend von der dominanten Position der englischen Sprache kann festgestellt werden, dass die Übersetzung vom Türkischen ins Englische weitgehend bevorzugt wird und die Übersetzung in die andere Richtung ziemlich langsam erfolgt. Es wurde jedoch festgestellt, dass ab den 80'er Jahren die Übersetzungen vom Türkischen ins Englische deutlich zugenommen haben. Dies gilt auch für die Werke (insbesondere Romane und Erzählungen) von türkischen Schriftstellerinnen, was auch auf den Zusammenhang zwischen der Emanzipations-Entwicklung der Frauen und der schriftstellerischen Tätigkeit zeigt. In der vorliegenden Arbeit wird auch kurz darauf hingewiesen, welche Werke nicht übersetzt wurden und womit das zusammenhängt. Außerdem wird auch kurz auf die Rolle des Übersetzers bei der Bekanntmachung und Verbreitung von Übersetzungen

aus "minor" Sprachen eingegangen. Im Anschluss werden einige türkische Schriftstellerinnen vorgestellt, um einen Einblick in Bezug auf die Besonderheiten der Werke von türkischen Schriftstellerinnen zu gewinnen.

**Keywords:** Turkish literature. Turkish women novelists. Turkish women poets. Translations into English.

**Keywords/Schlüsselwörter:** Türkische Literatur. Türkische Novellistinnen. Türkische Poetinnen. Übersetzungen ins Englische.

## 1. Introduction

There is no doubt that the dominant position of English in the translation market, i.e. its large share in translation flows, has become a global phenomenon. The figures Johan Heilbron (1999: 434) refers to indicate that “more than 40 percent of all the translated books worldwide around 1980 were translated from English” (see also Venuti 1995: 12; Cronin 2003: 139). It seems that globalisation has continued to reinforce this inequality in translation flows. As is the case in countries that belong to a minor language<sup>1</sup> group in terms of translation, Turkey has been rather dependent on translations from major languages. Looking at the bibliography of translated works of Turkish literature into English, however, it is possible to see that since the 1980s there has been a considerable increase in the number of literary works translated into English. Especially in recent years this increase has become much more obvious with the establishment of TEDA [Türk Edebiyatını Dı arıya Açma Projesi], the translation subvention project initiated in 2005 by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey. The primary aim of this project is the dissemination of Turkish culture through the translation and publication of Turkish cultural, artistic and literary works. Obviously, Orhan Pamuk’s Nobel Prize for literature in 2006 can be considered a milestone in Turkish literary history, which has had a direct impact on the promotion of works of Turkish literature abroad. And, not surprisingly, Turkey’s first Nobel prize threw its weight behind the 2008 Frankfurt Book Fair, in which Turkey was the guest of honour. Finally, in 2010 Istanbul is honoured as the European Capital of Culture, which has earned Istanbul, “the symbol of the country” and thus

---

1. In her article, “Trends in the Translation of a Minority Language”, Stella Linn refers to the “core-periphery model” applied by sociologists (Heilbron 1999) to the production of cultural goods. As Linn explains, the “core position” of a language, according to this model, is “determined not so much by [its] number of native speakers as by the number of people for whom that language is a second language and the extent to which the language is translated. In other words, the more centrally it is located in the global translation system, the more translations a language generates” (2006: 28). In this sense, languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic and Portuguese are minor languages despite their large number of speakers (Heilbron 1999: 434).

Turkish culture in general, more international visibility through various cultural and artistic projects.

On the other hand, there have been other initiatives with respect to the translation of Turkish literary works into English. CWTTL, the International Cunda Workshop for Translators of Turkish Literature [TEÇCA, Türk Edebiyatı Çevirmenleri Cunda Uluslararası Atölyesi], which was initiated in 2006 by Saliha Paker, has been supported by Boğaziçi and Koç universities, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the EU Culture-programme funded Literature Across Frontiers (LAF) Project. In this conjuncture the First International Symposium of Translators and Publishers of Turkish Literature was held in June 2007 with the collaboration of publishers, translators, authors, associations, copyright agencies, the Ministry and Boğaziçi University. As reported on the web page of TEDA, the symposium “was so effective that just in two years 500 Turkish literary works applied to receive support from the TEDA Project.” It is clear that the immediate consequences of these accomplishments and initiatives have been very positive in generating more interest in Turkish literature, hence increasing the number of translations into English and other languages while, unquestionably, “contributing to a changing perception of Turkish literature” (Paker in Taşcıoğlu 2008: 47). Nevertheless, despite the growing number of translations into English and the increasing visibility of Turkish writers in the international arena through various organizations, such as book fairs and literature festivals, Turkish women writers in English translation can be considered to be occupying a “minority” status for three reasons: First, the works are translated from Turkish, a “minor” language (and literature compared to English). Second, the works are “translations” (as opposed to being composed originally in English). Third, they are translations of Turkish “women’s” writing (women writers being underrepresented compared to their male counterparts in translation). To start contextualizing Turkish women’s writing in English, a brief decriptive analysis of the bibliography of translated works of Turkish literature in English seems relevant. Let us now look at this broader corpus.

## 2. Turkish Literature in English Translation

The framework for this decriptive analysis is set against the consideration of some preliminary questions prompted by the bibliography of Turkish literature in English translation. Looking for answers to questions such as the authors and genres which have (not) been translated and when these translations have been made, will give an idea about the “minority” status of Turkish literature and particularly of Turkish women writers in English translation.

YEAR/ CATEGORY	1880- 1900	1900- 1920	1920- 1940	1940- 1960	1960- 1980	1980- 2000	2000- 2010	Total
Poetry	1	1		3	13	25	29	72
Short Story				1	3	6	26	36
Novel			1	4	9	14	40	68
Drama			1		2	6	1	10
Miscellaneous*	4	3	1	1	10	10	8	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>223</b>

\* Collections of fables, fairy tales, folk tales; autobiography; memoirs; compilation of translated poetry and fiction.

Table 1. Number and type of English translations from Turkish literature 1882-2010

My intention is not to offer an exhaustive survey of the whole corpus of Turkish literature in English translation.<sup>2</sup> Nor do I intend to present in-depth analyses of those works by women writers that are included. I will rather concentrate particularly on the period starting with the 1980s which marks a breakthrough in terms of the rise of Turkish fiction translated into English in tandem with the entry of Turkish novelists such as Latife Tekin and Orhan Pamuk to the international literary scene.

To begin with, nothing seems to have been translated from Turkish<sup>3</sup> into English before 1882. And, as the figures below show, prior to 1940, hardly any translations were made. Between the years 1920 and 1940, a total of only three translations appeared, including the first Turkish novel in English; that is, the translation of Halide Edib's *Ateşten Gömlek* (1922), which was first translated by the author herself (*The Shirt of Flame*, 1924), to be re-translated by Muhammed Yakub Khan in 1941 (*The Daughter of Smyrna*). The number of translations begins to increase in the 1960s, especially with translations of Yaşar Kemal's novels and Nâzım Hikmet's poems, the two most widely translated Turkish writers. Apart from Nâzım Hikmet, there are other poets translated into English in this period, such as Fazıl Hüsni Dağlarca, Orhan Veli Kanık, and Melih Cevdet Anday.

2. For further information, see Saliha Paker (2001) and Melike Yılmaz Baştuğ (2009).

3. It should be noted that the language used during the whole Ottoman period was not Turkish, but Ottoman Turkish (Osmanlıca), which was much influenced by Arabic and Persian. Following the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Arabic script of Ottoman Turkish was officially replaced by Latin letters with the alphabet reform of 1928.

As mentioned above, there is a remarkable increase in the volume of translations from 1980 onwards. Actually, it is possible to talk about two major translation trends from 1980 to present: First, contrary to the popular belief that poetry is not read, poetry translations have not declined at all. Moreover, as Saliha Paker also states (and as it is clearly seen in Table 1), “Turkish poetry [...] has enjoyed more popularity in translation than fiction” (Paker 2008). Comprising 33% of the total output of translations, poetry has been, perhaps surprisingly, the most translated genre and naturally deserves attention as a weighty component of the context. There may be several reasons behind this large share that Turkish poetry has come to possess in English translation. It may be related to the popularity of poetry in Turkey as a form of expression. This view is supported by the observation of Necmi Zekâ who writes,

Indeed Turkey is a country well deserving to be called a nation of poets, if not necessarily poetry readers. Despite incredibly low sales of poetry volumes, every month the number of unsolicited poems submitted to literary journals is easily double, even triple, the journals’ circulation figures. One can safely argue that poetry in Turkey is the most favored form of personal expression. (2003: 529-530)

In like manner, Talat Sait Halman, one of the most active agents in translating and promoting Turkish poetry, begins his preface to *A Brave New Quest: 100 Modern Turkish Poems* with a reference to Turkey’s best known satirist Aziz Nesin’s “fanciful observation” that “four out of three Turks are poets” (2006: xi) so as to underline the supremacy of poetry in Ottoman and Turkish literature and its still acclaimed power despite the ascendancy of the novel. While assessing the large share of Turkish poetry in translation, one should also consider the impact of Nâzım Hikmet, the exiled “revolutionary” Turkish poet, and translations of his poetry into English. The role of translators such as Talat Sait Halman, Randy Blasing, Mutlu Konuk, and Murat Nemet-Nejat, as well as scholars of Turkish and Ottoman literature such as Walter G. Andrews, and scholars of translation studies in Turkey such as Saliha Paker and Suat Karantay as initiators, translators, or editors of these publications should not be overlooked either.

The second major trend in translations from Turkish literature into English can be observed in the systematic increase in the translation of fiction. The number of novels translated into English between 1980 and 2000 increased from fourteen to forty within the following ten years (2000-2010). A radical increase is also observed in the translation of short story. The number of short story collections/anthologies published between 2000-2010 is twenty-six, which is four times the number produced within the past twenty years.

This is an outcome of several factors which include, but are not limited to, the success of certain Turkish writers (e.g. Orhan Pamuk) on the international market, the growing interest in “Third-world literature” and also the growing number of works of fiction published in Turkey. And it is precisely in fiction that Turkish women writers have had a chance to be represented in English translation, which is also closely tied to this increase in the number of novels and short story collections to which women writers have had a considerable contribution.

A noteworthy point regarding the increase in the number of novels translated into English since the 1980s and 1990s is the entry of several Turkish novelists to the international literary scene, including among others, Latife Tekin, Orhan Pamuk, Bilge Karasu, Orhan Kemal, and Elif Şafak. Although Pamuk has been the most renowned Turkish novelist abroad (with the exception of Yaşar Kemal) even before he won the Nobel Prize in 2006, English translations from other Turkish novelists did not fail to draw attention. Actually, shortly after the publication of Pamuk’s English debut *The White Castle* (1991; Tr. *Beyaz Kale*, 1985) translated by Victoria Holbrook, another debut, that is, Latife Tekin’s *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills* (1993; Tr. *Berci Kristin Çöp Masalları*, 1984) translated by Saliha Paker and Ruth Christie, was very well received as a book that portrayed a much peculiar setting through an equally peculiar narration. Often compared to Gabriel Garcia Marquez in its use of magic realism, Tekin’s next novel in English, *Dear Shameless Death* (2001; Tr. *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm*, 1983), which was translated by Saliha Paker and Mel Kenne, also met with interest in the Anglophone world. Following these, *The Garden of Departed Cats* (2003; Tr. *Göçmüş Kediler Bahçesi*, 1991), by Bilge Karasu, another unique voice in modern Turkish fiction, was translated by Aron Aji and it received the National Translation Award given by the American Literary Translators Association in 2004. One year later, Elif Şafak’s *The Flea Palace* (2004; Tr. *Bit Palas*, 2002), translated by Müge Göçek, was shortlisted for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize together with Pamuk’s *Snow* (2005; Tr. *Kar*, 2002) translated by Maureen Freely.

### 2.1. Turkish Women’s Fiction in English Translation

Without doubt, a deeper analysis of Turkish women’s fiction in English translation requires providing answers to further questions such as the following:

- Which Turkish female writers and which of their works were translated?
- What was *not* translated?
- When were these texts translated?

- Who published the translated texts?
- What determined the selection of titles; i.e. what was the motivation behind the publication of these titles?

As mentioned in the beginning, Turkish women writers occupy a “minority” position, particularly because they are underrepresented in translation compared to their male counterparts. It is only recently that the number of translations of women writers’ work has reached nearly half the number of those by male writers. And it can be obviously asserted that prior to 1980, Turkish women writers were almost non-existent in the Anglo-American system. They started to get translated into English in the 1980s and 1990s. The bibliography of translated works of Turkish literature into English (1882-2010) also shows that it is particularly in the novel that women writers could get the chance of being translated. The number of English translations of novels by women writers has always been higher compared to other genres. The figures demonstrate that the translation of novel constitutes 65%, the translation of short story 20%, the translation of poetry 9%, and the translation of miscellaneous works 6% of the total number of translations of works by Turkish women writers.

The fact that women writers started to get translated into English in the 1980s and 1990s is to a great extent related to the bond between writing and women’s increased consciousness. It can be safely argued that the novel has been *the* genre which made it possible for Turkish women to make their voices heard as is the case in many other countries. Turkish women writers’ relationship with the novel has been stimulating both for women’s “awakening” and for the evolution of Turkish literature. In her article, “Unmuffled Voices in the Shade and Beyond: Women’s Writing in Turkish,” Saliha Paker states that “[Turkish] women have distinguished themselves most prominently in fiction” (1991: 271) and that “women’s fiction must be considered *the most important domain* for the growth of a feminist consciousness [because] distinctive female viewpoints in the 1960s [...] found, and continued to find, literary expression first in short stories and later in novels” (1991: 286, emphasis mine). Especially the novel of the 1980s, which breaks away with the socialist realism of the previous age and which is identified with a concern for form and language, has been enormously effective in giving a voice to women writers. This was an age where “newness” entered the world: the new feminist women’s movement coincided with *avant garde* writing in search for new forms and new ways of saying (Moran 2002: 49-57). The same observation is voiced by Güneli Gün in her article entitled “The Woman in the Dark Room: Contemporary Women Writers in Turkey”, where she points out that “Turkey



must be one of the few countries in the world where women writers have been leading the avant-garde for the past two decades” (1986: 275). In his reviews of works by Turkish women writers in *World Literature Today*, Talat Sait Halman also emphasizes the innovative, unconventional aspect of this fiction. Halman states, for instance, that Leyla Erbil’s “most daring innovations had been in the domain of language” and that her novel *Karanlığın Günü* [The Day of Darkness] “is anything but conventional” (1987a: 152). Regarding Nazlı Eray, one of the most influential women writers to have challenged mainstream realistic fiction of the 1980s, Halman remarks that in blending fantasy and phantasmagoria “[Eray] is unique in Turkey. No one has her style, her substance, her structure” (1987b: 345). Besides Erbil and Eray, writers such as Latife Tekin, Aysel Özakın, Fürüzan, Adalet Ağaoğlu and Pınar Kür have played a significant role in shaping modern and post-modern Turkish fiction. Consequently, Halman states, “although many first-rate male novelists (among them the world-famous Yashar Kemal, often mentioned as a Nobel Prize prospect) have produced impressive fiction in the past twenty years or so, the collective work of women writers has carried the day” (1990: 359). Thus, it appears as no coincidence that the first novel in English translation following Halide Edib’s *The Daughter of Smyrna* (1941), *The Prizegiving* (*Genç Kız ve Ölüm*, 1980) by Aysel Özakın appears in 1988 at a time when women’s fiction started to “carry the day”. Although there are conspicuous gaps in the corpus of translated Turkish women’s fiction (especially between the 1940s and 80s) and translations may appear to be quite scattered and spotty, some of the selections are still worth noting as they signify a distinct women’s writing and/or literary tradition in Turkey.

*Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills*, Latife Tekin’s second novel in Turkish and her first in English translation, tells the stories of *gecekondu*, i.e. shanty-town, people who struggle to live a life built on rubbish tips. This is a life which is continuously de- and re-constructed like the tales themselves. And it is this narration of the shanty-town people and their stories that makes Tekin’s book truly original. Thus John Berger starts his preface to the book saying “I have never read another book like this one” (1993: 5). Not only does Tekin make shanty-towns the actual centre of the story, rather than a mere setting or representative of social problems, but she also builds up a distinct language which is both heartbreaking and funny, both solid and fleeting, both metaphoric and unrhetoical. More importantly, it is a language that is feminine, whereas the book is centred around an essentially male-dominated world. It is a “man’s world,” Paker states, “but women appear in it as strangely powerful figures, despite their subordination. Their world in Tekin’s fiction

maintains a distinctive interaction with its male counterpart and womanhood is conceived as a secret society resisting and, at times, subverting oppressive forces” (1993: 13). The creative language and the dazzling atmosphere infused with magic as well as sheer realism hold the stage in Tekin’s following novels as well. *Dear Shameless Death*, an autobiographical novel that tells the story of the protagonist, Dirmit, and her family, who struggle to adapt to the ways of the city they migrated to. The last of Tekin’s novels that appeared in English translation, *Swords of Ice*, is about a poor community, the “ragged men”, particularly Halilhan Sunteriler, who saves a red Volvo from the scrapyard, his brothers and their wives, and his friend Gogi. The thread that connects the stories in these novels is poverty or the “tongueless world of the dispossessed”, which Latife Tekin says she “translates into the language of this world” (Tekin 1989: 69). It is apparently this thread that has led the publisher to present *Swords of Ice* as “part of a trilogy including *Dear Shameless Death* and *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills*” (back cover). In accordance with this presentation, the *Edinburgh Review* also contextualizes these novels in the form of a trilogy which is “loosely bound together by Tekin’s attempts to find a voice to describe underprivileged migrants and their attempts to integrate successfully into city life” (Adcock 2009: 112).

If Latife Tekin has been the voice of the dispossessed who live in the margins of the city, Elif Şafak (or, Shafak, as she prefers in English spelling) has been the voice of the (usually bourgeois) “marginals” who live in the heart of the cosmopolitan city. Şafak made her debut on the international arena with *The Flea Palace*, which presents a kaleidoscopic view of the contemporary Istanbul through episodic narratives relating the stories of the inhabitants of a dilapidated, bug-infested apartment building. *The Gaze* (2006; Tr. Mahrem, 2000) is the translation of Şafak’s third novel in Turkish, which won the Writers Union of Turkey Award for best novel of the year. It brings together the seemingly disconnected stories of a bizarre freak-show in Istanbul in the 1880s, a Sable-Girl—a half-sable, half-human creature—whose past goes back to the 17th century Siberia, and the love between an obese woman and a dwarf who compiles a “Dictionary of Gazes” in modern-day Istanbul. Yet, it is actually Şafak’s novels written in English which have introduced her to Anglophone readers, particularly *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2007). First published in Turkish translation as *Baba ve Piç* (literally, Father and Bastard) in 2006, it is, without doubt, the novel that has truly made Elif Şafak an internationally recognized writer. In fact, even before the novel was published in the English original, it was already known and started to be discussed by the international

media due to the charges brought against Şafak for “insulting Turkishness”, hence violating the notorious Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code.

Adalet Ağaoğlu, one of the most eminent and prolific writers of Turkey, has two novels available in English translation. Ağaoğlu is known for creating a complex world which brings together the socio-political and historical reality enveloping the characters and events, and the psychological realm which blends the past and the present, the imaginary and the real. Yet, as Robert P. Finn aptly observes in *Curfew* (1997; Tr. *Üç Beş Kişi*, 1984), Ağaoğlu’s novels are “not [completely] dreamlike, but instead almost frighteningly accurate in capturing the strands of reality and imagination, recollection and projection that make up our mental state” (2009: 136). This holds true for *Summer’s End* (2008; Tr. *Yazsonu*, 1980) as well, Ağaoğlu’s fourth novel in Turkish, which focuses on the second half of the 1970s Turkey. In this novel, too, Ağaoğlu takes the reader to an elusive space where it is hard to tell what is real from what is imaginary. Set in a city on the Mediterranean coast and narrated by an author, the novel presents several themes from the in/ability to write to loneliness and love, from the similarity and contrast between the setting and characters to the politics of the period.

Short fiction by Turkish women writers has appeared in several anthologies, although no woman writer has been represented by an individual collection. *Twenty Stories by Turkish Women Writers*, edited and translated by Nilüfer Mizanoğlu Reddy, is the only collection to have brought together women writers exclusively. Of prime importance is the recent two-volume anthology *Contemporary Turkish Short Fiction*, edited by Suat Karantay. This is “the largest compilation to date of Turkish stories in English translation” (two volumes include a total of 87 stories by 62 writers) with an aim to represent “both established and up-and-coming Turkish writers, roughly half of whom are women.”<sup>4</sup>

The observation as to the proliferation in women’s fiction in the 1980s and the recent increase in the number of translations should not, however, make us oblivious to the fact that there were prolific women writers in the past. The range of previous work should also be taken into consideration and the writers and texts that have *not* been translated should be searched. The question of what has/has not been selected for translation can especially provide us with clues about “the norms that govern literary taste in Turkey” (Paker 2001: 623) as well as the norms of the Anglo-American publishing

4. From the blurb on the website of the publisher. Available at <http://www.citlembik.com.tr/kitap.php?lang=en&isbn=9789944424479>

market. A brief survey of the works produced by women writers proves that a considerable number of fiction has never been translated (into English) at all. Amongst these are, for example, the novels of Suat Derviş, Afet İlğaz, Peride Celal, Leyla Erbil, Sevgi Soysal, Sevim Burak and Ayla Kutlu, who have significantly influenced the course of Turkish fiction. A more interesting point is that despite the remarkable number of novels written after Halide Edib, there are not any translations carried out between 1941 and 1988. Thus, it is inevitable to ask whether this is a “meaningful void” (Tourey 1995: 114). In other words, the question is how it is possible to account for the non-existence of English translations of novels by women writers between these years. Apparently, some of the women writers writing before the 1960s produced popular romantic fiction, that is, “run-of-the-mill romances which set the general trend” of the period (Paker 1991: 285). On the other hand, the “woman-focused literary tradition” (Paker 1991: 286) of the 1960s and 1970s was marked by social awareness and left-wing politics. Although such fiction can be considered revolutionary in terms of introducing fresh viewpoints regarding form and language as well as sexuality, it was “far from being duly appreciated by the critical establishment” (Paker 1991: 287). Thus, it might be argued that this “woman-focused literary tradition” needs to be re-read and/or re-discovered in order to be made known to the English-speaking world. And, it is at this point that the significance of scholarly criticism generated both in the source and target cultures becomes all the more visible.

In addition to which texts were translated and which were not, the question of who translated the texts certainly deserves attention as well. Looking at the material from the standpoint of the translators is necessary in the sense that it makes one all the more cognizant of the role individual translators play in the dissemination of works from “minor” languages. As put most aptly by Pascale Casanova, “the translator, having become the indispensable intermediary for crossing the borders of the literary world, is an essential figure in the history of writing” (2004: 142). The translator, then, is to be viewed from a broader angle, as she does not merely carry out a task working between source and target languages and cultures. The translator, translating, in particular, from a “minor” language (such as Turkish) does function as a creator of literary value in making it possible for texts to “obtain a certificate of literary standing” (ibid: 135). The story of how Latife Tekin’s *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills* and *Dear Shameless Death* got published in English is a perfect example to this issue. In the interview that is included in Ayşe Ayhan’s MA thesis on the reception of Tekin’s literary works, Salih Paker relates *her-story*, which provides us with fruitful information as to how the translator can

initiate and activate the process of publication in one of the capitals of the international literary arena (Ayhan 2005: Appendix 12).

As for the question of who published the translated texts, the bibliographical data on Turkish women's fiction in English translation reveals other interesting material. It is worth pointing out, for instance, that the English translation of Aysel Özakin's novel, *The Prizegiving*, was published in 1988 by The Women's Press. The name of the publishing house is telling enough, but what's more important is how this publishing house introduces itself: "Established in 1978, The Women's Press is dedicated to publishing incisive feminist fiction and non-fiction by outstanding women writers from all round the world" (www.the-womens-press.com). There are several points in this information that immediately draw one's attention and that need to be investigated. To begin with, the year in which The Women's Press was set up is definitely significant in terms of the context. Von Flotow underlines the role publishing houses played in translation and feminism as follows:

Feminist initiatives of the 1970s triggered enormous interest in texts by women writers from other cultures. This led to the realization that much writing by women has never been translated at all, and to the suspicion that what has been translated has been misrepresented in 'patriarchal translation'. Thus extensive translation and re-translation activity was set off, for which willing publishers were found [...] The context created by the women's movement encouraged the development of women's publishing houses (The Women's Press in London, Editions des femmes in Paris, Frauenoffensive in Munich, Les editions du remuemenage in Montreal) [...]" (Flotow 1997: 49)

In addition to what The Women's Press served for, the facts that Özakin's novel was identified as a "feminist" novel and chosen for translation and publication, and that Özakin was considered an "outstanding" woman writer cannot be ignored. The way a publisher perceives and "names" a work in a particular way is suggestive in understanding how the work gets (re)contextualized in the target system. It should also be noted that university presses (especially in America) and small independent publishing companies (such as Marion Boyars, Milet and Serpent's Tail) that are "brave" enough to publish translations have played a highly significant role in publishing works of Turkish women writers and introducing them to the Anglophone world.

## 2.2. *Turkish Women's Poetry in English Translation*

The category of "collective" (including male and female authors) in the bibliography of works of Turkish literature translated into English can be misleading. This category includes mainly anthologies/collections of poetry (besides

short story) and although it is very hard to detect the exact number of female poets to have been translated, basic research reveals that the voices of female poets can hardly be heard in English. To date, there have been only three individual collections by three women poets; namely, Lâle Müldür, Bejan Matur and Gülseli İnal.

Despite the quite impressive number of anthologies of Turkish poetry mentioned above, the translations of women poets have not been given much space within these anthologies. For example, in the earliest most comprehensive anthology of Turkish poetry, *The Penguin Book of Turkish Verse* (1978, edited by Nermin Menemencioğlu), Gülten Akın is the only woman poet with her 4 poems to be included, while there are 297 poems by 81 male poets. In a more recent anthology, *Eda: An Anthology of Contemporary Turkish Poetry* (2004, edited by Murat Nemet-Nejat), there are 10 poems translated from 5 women poets as opposed to 141 poems by 29 male poets. Likewise, another one entitled *A Brave New Quest: 100 Modern Turkish Poems* seems to be far from being a “brave new quest” on the part of women poets to be included. Only two women poets (represented by one poem each) among the 44 names were chosen on grounds that they contributed to a newly emerging “brave new synthesis” (Halman 2006: xii) in Turkish poetry. The issue of the representation of women poets in these anthologies, which constitute a significant part of histories of Turkish literature, calls into question why it is not possible to hear the plural voices of women in this particular genre. It appears that the comparatively low number of women poets is not the only reason behind this issue. What is at stake here is that cultural and sociological factors have a rather significant influence on the “underrepresentation” of Turkish women poets both in the source and receiving cultures. As Paker writes, “Although women are known to have written poetry over the centuries, some with male pseudonyms, very few achieved the status of poet in the literary canon” (1991: 276). An interesting article entitled “Singing His Words: Ottoman Women Poets and the Power of Patriarchy” by Kemal Silay discusses “how the patriarchal environment of medieval Ottoman-Turkish society ostracized and automatically controlled the voice of women in classical lyric poetry” (1997: 199). Silay also explores what these Ottoman women poets, such as Fitnat Hanım, Zeyneb Hatun, Leyla Hanım and Şeref Hanım, did “in order to gain legitimacy as poets in a men’s club of literature, a literature which did not even allow its male practitioners to express their own personality or identity easily” (*ibid.*). Contemporary Turkish poetry may not be as “male-dominated” as before. The underrepresentation of women poets, however, seems to be an ongoing issue which has had its consequences in translation as well.

Gülten Akın, “the contemporary Turkish woman poet *par excellence*” (Paker 1991: 277) who is “sometimes known as Turkey’s ‘Mother Poet’” (Christie 2009: 143), has been writing poetry for more than half a century. Unfortunately, Akın’s poetry has not been sufficiently made known to the English-speaking audience except for a number of her poems selected and translated for the anthologies; there is not an individual collection representing the poet and her poetry. However, *Voice of Hope: Turkish Woman Poet Gülten Akın* by Hilal Sürsal published in 2008 is considered “an important contribution to the study of Turkish poetry, not least because there has been as yet no major study of the poet’s work either in Turkey or abroad” (Christie 2009: 142). Besides referring to interviews with the poet and critical articles on her poetry, the book includes translations as well as detailed analyses of her poems. Although the subtitle of the book refers both to the nationality and the sex of the poet, it should be noted that Akın does not prefer to be identified as a “feminist” or “woman” poet in spite of the fact that her poetry has “given a voice to Anatolia’s inarticulate poor and disempowered, above all to its women” (Christie 2009: 143).

Amongst the three women poets represented by an individual collection, Bejan Matur can be considered to be one of the most original voices of contemporary Turkish poetry. Born to a Kurdish Alevi family, Matur captures in her poetry the music of elegy expressed with(in) images of pain, childhood, and the tragic loneliness of mankind, and always with a language which is utterly profound and refined. Matur’s *In the Temple of a Patient God*, a bilingual selection of her poems from four previous books, reflects—in the “admirable” translation of Ruth Christie (Paker 2004: 8)—this distinctive music which also bears the traces of Southeastern Turkey embedded in its folk tales, its own stories, colours and voices.

### 3. Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, Turkey rather depends on translations from English whereas it exports far less translations into this language. The present survey has shown that Turkish women writers in English translation have occupied a “minority” position mainly due to the lack of translations. On the other hand, the increase in the number of translations of Turkish women’s fiction especially in the last decade is very promising. Yet, the harsh facts of the Anglo-American publishing industry, if not the so-called “cultural barriers”, continue to obstruct the recognition and dissemination of Turkish women (as well as male) writers in English. In fact, the numbers do not necessarily account for the reception of translations from Turkish literature and,

for that matter, Turkish women writers. Without doubt, translations do not truly become “visible” unless they are read and reviewed. As Paker puts it, “The translations have got to be read first, *and reviewed*, in the target cultures, i.e. we have to know how they have been received before we can say much about ‘image’ or ‘perception’” (in Taşcıoğlu 2008: 48). Walter G. Andrews, an American scholar of Turkish and Ottoman literature teaching in the U.S., also underscores the fact that the number of translations from Turkish literature is clearly not decisive for its “visibility” within the target system (the U.S.). His observations based on solid facts (the huge publication industry, the disappearance of Turkish literature programs from major universities, etc.) also account for the *lack* of translations and reviews that stem from the central position of English as it exports far more translations than it imports (2008: 56). It is thus possible to conclude that since translations of even much appreciated Turkish women writers have not received much interest from the reviewers, this lack also confirms the “minority” position of Turkish women writers in English. Nevertheless, even if Turkish women’s writing, particularly its diversity in the plurality of expressions, has not been truly recognized and appreciated in the Anglophone world, the recent years have shown that with the growing interest in Turkish literature and culture, and with the success of the TEDA program as well as devoted translators and scholars, the situation is changing slowly but promisingly.

### Translations

- (ADIVAR), Halide Edib. (1924) *The Shirt of Flame*. Trans. Halide Edib (Adivar). New York: Duffield & Company.
- (ADIVAR), Halide Edib. (1941) *The Daughter of Smyrna*. Trans. Muhammed Yakub Khan. Lahore: Ripon Printing Press.
- AĞAOĞLU, Adalet. (1997) *Curfew*. Trans. John Goulden. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- AĞAOĞLU, Adalet. (2008) *Summer’s End*. Trans. Figen Bingül. New Jersey: Talisman House Publishers.
- ARAL, İnci. (2004) *Two Stories*. Trans. Işıl Kü. Istanbul: Epsilon.
- ATASÜ, Erendiz. (2000) *The Other Side of the Mountain*. Trans. Elizabeth Maslen & Erendiz Atasü. London: Milet Publishing Ltd.
- AYVERDİ, Samiha. (1995) *The Friend*. Trans. İsmet Tümtürk. Istanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyatı.
- BAYDAR, Oya. (2009) *Lost Words*. Trans. Stephanie Ateş. London: Peter Owen Publishers.



- ERAY, Nazlı. (2006) *Orpheus*. Trans. Robert Finn. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- ERDOĞAN, Aslı. (2007) *The City in Crimson Cloak*. Trans. Amy Spangler. New York: Soft Skull Press, Inc.
- FÜRÜZAN. (2001) *A Summer Full of Love*. Trans. Damian Croft. London: Milet Publishing Ltd.
- İNAL, Gülseli. (2005) *Selected Poems*. Trans. Sidney Wade. Istanbul: Horizon Helix.
- KARANTAY, Suat (ed.) (2009) *Contemporary Turkish Short Fiction: A Selection I*. Istanbul: Çitlembik Publications.
- KARANTAY, Suat (ed.) (2009) *Contemporary Turkish Short Fiction: A Selection II*. Istanbul: Çitlembik Publications.
- KULIN, Ayşe. (2004) *Photo 'Sabah' Pictures*. Trans. Martina Keskin-tepe. Istanbul: Epsilon.
- KULIN, Ayşe. (2006) *Last Train to Istanbul*. Trans. John W. Baker. Istanbul: Everest.
- KULIN, Ayşe. (2007) *Aylin*. Trans. Dârâ Çolakoğlu. Istanbul. Remzi Kitabevi.
- KULIN, Ayşe. (2008) *Face to Face*. Trans. John W. Baker. Istanbul: Everest.
- KULIN, Ayşe. (2009) *Farewell*. Trans. Kenneth J. Dakan. Istanbul: Everest.
- KÜR, Pınar. (2004) *A Crazy Tree*. Trans. Ruth Christie. Istanbul: Epsilon.
- MAĞDEN, Perihan. (2003) *The Messenger Boy Murders*. Trans. Richard Hamer. London: Milet Publishing Ltd.
- MAĞDEN, Perihan. (2005) *2 Girls*. Trans. Brendan Freely. London: Serpent's Tail.
- MATUR, Bejan. (2004) *In the Temple of a Patient God*. Trans. Ruth Christie. Todmorden: Arc Publications.
- MIZANOĞLU REDDY, Nilüfer (trans. & ed.) (1988) *Twenty Stories by Turkish Women Writers*. Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies.
- MÜLDÜR, Lâle. (1998) *Water Music*. Trans. Leland Bardwel et al. Dublin: Poetry Ireland.
- ÖZAKIN, Aysel. (1988) *The Prizegiving*. Trans. Celia Kerslake. London: The Women's Press Ltd.
- SÜRSAL, Hilal. (2008) *Voice of Hope: Turkish Woman Poet Gülten Akin*. Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies Series.
- ŞAFAK, Elif. (2004) *The Flea Palace*. Trans. Müge Göçek. London & New York: Marion Boyars.
- ŞAFAK, Elif. (2006) *The Gaze*. Trans. Brendan Freely. London & New York: Marion Boyars.
- TEKİN, Latife. (1993) *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills*. Trans. Saliha Parker & Ruth Christie. London & New York: Marion Boyars.
- TEKİN, Latife. (2001) *Dear Shameless Death*. Trans. Saliha Parker & Mel Kenne. London & New York: Marion Boyars.

- TEKIN, Latife. (2007) *Swords of Ice*. Trans. Saliha Paker & Mel Kenne. London: Faber & Faber.
- UYAR, Tomris. (2004) *The Guests at the Moribund Hotel*. Trans. Nilüfer Mizanoğlu Reddy. Istanbul: Epsilon.
- UZUNER, Buket. (2000) *Mediterranean Waltz*. Trans. Pelin Arner. Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.
- UZUNER, Buket. (2001) *A Cup of Turkish Coffee*. Trans. Pelin Arner. London: Milet Publishing Ltd.
- UZUNER, Buket. (2002) *The Sound of Fishsteps*. Trans. Pelin Arner. Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.

## References

- ADCOCK, Hannah. (2009) "Latife Tekin Trilogy". *The Edinburgh Review* 125. pp. 112-114.
- ANDREWS, Walter G. (2008) "Turkish Literature on the World Stage: Good News – Bad News". *Turkish Book Review* July-December. pp. 54-58.
- AYHAN, Ayşe. (2005) *Translation and the Authorial Image: Reception of Latife Tekin's Literary Works within the Source and Target Culture(s)*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis submitted to Boğaziçi University.
- BERGER, John. (1993) "Rumour: Preface by John Berger". In: Tekin, Latife. 1993. *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills*. London & New York: Marion Boyars. pp. 5-8.
- CASANOVA, Pascale. (2004) *The World Republic of Letters*. Trans. M. B. DeBevoise. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- CHRISTIE, Ruth. (2009) "Voice of Hope". *Journal of Turkish Literature* 6. pp. 142-147.
- CRONIN, Michael. (2003) *Translation and Globalization*. London: Routledge.
- FINN, Robert P. (2009) "A Look at Some Turkish Women Novelists". *Turkish book review* 4 (January - June). pp. 132-136.
- FLOTOW, Luise von. (1997) *Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'Era of Feminism'*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- GÜN, Güneli. (1986) "The Woman in the Dark Room: Contemporary Women Writers in Turkey". *World Literature Today* 60:2. pp. 275-279.
- HALMAN, Talat Sait. (1987a) "Leyla Erbil. *Karanlığın Günü*" (Book Review in Near East Section). *World Literature Today* 61:1. pp. 152-153.
- HALMAN, Talat Sait. (1987b). "Nazlı Eray. *Deniz Kenarında Pazartesi*" (Book Review in Near East Section). *World Literature Today* 61:2. pp. 345-346.
- HALMAN, Talat Sait. (1990). "Twenty Stories by Turkish Women Writers" (Book Review in Near East Section). *World Literature Today* 64:2. p. 359.
- HALMAN, Talat Sait (ed.) (2006) *A Brave New Quest: 100 Modern Turkish Poems*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

- HEILBRON, Johan. (1999) "Towards a Sociology of Translation: Book Translations as a Cultural World System". *European Journal of Social Theory* 2:4. pp. 429-444.
- LINN, Stella. (2006) "Trends in the Translation of a Minority Language". In: Pym, Anthony; Miriam Shlesinger & Zuzana Jettmarová (eds.) 2006. *Sociocultural Aspects of Translating and Interpreting*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing. pp. 27-40.
- MORAN, Berna. (2002) *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış* 3. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- PAKER, Saliha. (1991) "Unmuffled Voices in the Shade and Beyond: Women's Writing in Turkish". In: Forsas-Scott, Helena (ed.) 1991. *Textual Liberation: European Feminist Writing in the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge. pp. 270-300.
- PAKER, Saliha. (1993) "Introduction". In: Tekin, Latife. 1993. *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills*. London & New York: Marion Boyars. pp. 9-14.
- PAKER, Saliha. (2001) "Turkish". In: France, Peter (ed.) 2001. *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 619-624.
- PAKER, Saliha. (2004) "Reading Turkish Novelists and Poets in English Translation: 2000-2004". *Translation Review* 68. pp. 6-18.
- PAKER, Saliha. (2008, April 18). "The Metonymics of Translating Turkish Fiction: Latife Tekin's *Swords of Ice* and Other Works in English". Keynote speech given in the IDEA Conference held at Ege University, Izmir.
- SILAY, Kemal. (1997). "Singing His Words: Ottoman Women Poets and the Power of Patriarchy". In: Zilfi, Madeline C. (ed.) 1997. *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*. Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill. pp. 197-213.
- TAŞÇIOĞLU, Arzu. (2008) "An Exceptional Translator, an Inspiring Tutor: Saliha Paker". *Turkish book review* July-December. pp. 47-53.
- TEKIN, Latife. (1989). "Yazar Değil Çevirmenim" ["I'm Not a Writer, but a Translator"]. Interview with Erdir Zat. *Nokta* (March). pp. 68-69.
- TOURY, Gideon. (1995) *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- VENUTI, Lawrence. (1995) *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London: Routledge.
- YILMAZ BAŞTUĞ, Melike. (2009) *A Translational Journey: Orhan Pamuk in English*. Saarbrücken: VDM.
- ZEKÂ, Necmi. (2003) "A Prisoner of Language: The Strange Case of Modern Turkish Poetry". In: Irzık, Sibel & Güven Güzeldere (eds.) 2003. *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102:2/3. pp. 529-534.