



Başak Çandar
Appalachian State University

WORLD LITERATURE'S OUTSIDES: TRANSNATIONAL TURKISH(ES) IN MURAT UYURKULAK'S *TOL*

Abstract:

Through an analysis of Turkish novelist Murat Uyrkulak's first novel *Tol: Bir Intikam Romanı* (Tol: A Revenge Novel), this article proposes that some texts fail to achieve "world-literariness" because of their multiplicity and transnationalism. Transnational and polyvocal texts push translation to its limits, which restricts such texts' ability to enter World Literature's modes of circulation. Given that transnationalism and multiplicity are qualities cherished and advocated by World Literature, this particularly transnational resistance to translation raises questions about the inadvertent politics of World Literature as a field of study and as a mode of circulation. As this article argues, Uyrkulak's *Tol* remains aware of these tensions of literary circulation. *Tol* details the collapse of the Turkish Left in the aftermath of the three military coups in the twentieth century. To narrate this nationally specific story, however, the novel uses a cacophonous language that reveals the multiplicities within Turkish culture and language, which make it impossible to see Turkish language and literature as purely Turkish. This article provides a brief history of what creates these multiplicities within Turkish language and culture, and argues that *Tol* uses a transnational framework to purposefully challenge both the Turkish nationalist myths of homogeneity and the tokenizing dynamics of world-literary circulation. Following Emily Apter's argument in *Against World Literature*, the article suggests untranslatability as an opportunity to think meaningfully about texts that depict a "transnational local" and uses *Tol*'s example to interrogate the place and role of Turkish Literature within World Literature.

Keywords: World Literature ♦ Turkish Literature ♦ translation ♦ transnational ♦ literary circulation

Murat Uyurkulak is a well-known name in Turkish literary circles, having published his first novel *Tol: Bir İntikam Romanı* (*Tol: A Revenge Novel*) almost two decades ago, in 2002. For an English readership, however, he is virtually unknown. None of Uyurkulak's novels has been translated into English, and there is limited English language scholarship on his works.¹ Although Uyurkulak's first two novels have been translated into other languages, Uyurkulak certainly has not had the global reach that Turkish authors like Orhan Pamuk or Elif Şafak have enjoyed, and his works fall outside the scope of world-literary canons.

Taking this marginality as my cue, I offer in this article an analysis of Uyurkulak's first novel *Tol* as a text that employs a particular resistance to translation, a resistance that tests our current assumptions about translatability and circulation within the canons of World Literature.² *Tol* displays what we might term a Turkish transnationalism³, a concurrently transnational and nationally specific focus that shows the transnational dialogues that occur *within* Turkish literature and culture. As I want to argue, the novel's transnationalism and plurality, qualities cherished and advocated by World Literature, pose serious challenges to translation. My argument is not so much about whether it is possible to translate Uyurkulak's novel, which has indeed been translated into French, German, and most recently Italian, nor that its translations are doomed to fail. Rather, I am interested in the particular *type* of resistance that emerges in *Tol*, a culturally specific transnationalism that pushes translation to its limits and challenges the assumption that transnational, multicultural works 'travel better.' As this analysis shows, some works fail to achieve a place in World Literature's modes of circulation *because* of their multiplicity and transnationalism. The notion of transnationalism as resistant to translation raises important questions about what constitutes "world literariness" and what allows or prevents translatability, all of which have significant implications for the politics of World Literature and for the position of Turkish Literature within World Literature.

¹ For a notable exception, see Meltem Gürle (2007) "'Cinema Grande' and The Rhetoric of Illusion in Uyurkulak's *Har*."

² I am indebted to Anton Shammas and his 2010 seminar titled "Resistance to Translation," both for the phrase "resistance to translation" and my understanding of the functions and limitations of translation.

³ My terminology here derives from Emily Apter's notion of "translational transnationalism," meant to mark "a cultural caesura" within translations that cannot readily or fully transmit meaning because of cultural or linguistic differences (Apter 2008: 5).

World Literature and Translation Studies

There is a robust body of works in World Literature scholarship that detail the fraught yet intimate relationship between World Literature and translation.⁴ One such example, Emily Apter's *The Translation Zone* begins with a tongue-in-cheek list of twenty theses on translation. The first thesis states "Nothing is Translatable," while the twentieth affirms "Everything is Translatable" (Apter 2016: xi). The apparent contradiction between immanent translatability and the a priori failure of translation has been a familiar enough maxim in Translation Studies, one that is frequently traced back to Walter Benjamin's elusive text "The Task of the Translator" ("Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers"). For Benjamin, translatability is an essential quality of certain, but not all, works. It is a quality, however, that only becomes visible and fulfilled at the moment of translation and connects the translation not so much to the life of the original as to its afterlife (2000: 76). Benjamin considers translation's practical uses—transmitting information and meaning into another language—as completely inessential, instead arguing that translation functions as a mode that approximates "pure language." For Benjamin, pure language is the intention of meaning shared by all languages, which cannot be expressed or communicated through any one language. It lays hidden beneath the surface, "close yet infinitely remote, concealed or distinguishable, fragmented and powerful" (81). Translation's only capacity, Benjamin argues, is recovering this incommunicable intention of meaning lurking behind languages, illuminating the central reciprocal relationship among them.

In this conceptualization of translation, it is not so much what is translated but what resists translation that becomes significant. If what is transmitted in translation—the translatable—is indeed inessential, and if translation's most significant achievement is to reveal the incommunicable but shared shard of meaning lurking behind the translatable, then we are left to conclude that what resists translation is indeed more significant in illuminating "the task of the translator." Accordingly, Emily Apter has proposed the untranslatable as a theoretical fulcrum with important implications for literary study, arguing for a shift of attention to the untranslatable, the mistranslated, what is lost in translation (Apter 2013: 3). Given that this proposal frames Apter's argument in her book *Against World Literature*, it is also meant as a corrective to the homogenizing tendencies of World Literature.

⁴ See Emily Apter (2007) *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* and (2013) *Against World Literature: On The Politics of Untranslatability*; David Damrosch (2003) *What Is World Literature?*; David Gramling (2016) *The Invention of Monolingualism*; Rebecca Walkowitz (2015) *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in An Age of World Literature*; See also "Comparative Literature/World Literature: A Discussion with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and David Damrosch" (2011).

Unlike Comparative Literature, which emphasizes philological study and requires its practitioners to read texts in their original languages, World Literature works through translations.⁵ It is tempting to think of Comparative Literature and World Literature as embodying the contradictory maxims of Translation Studies, with Comparative Literature deriving its practices and pedagogy from the a priori failures of translation, while World Literature relies on immanent translatability. Comparative Literature emphasizes the comparability of different linguistic traditions, but requires its practitioners to read works in their original language. Its implicit assumption is that there is something in the original that resists translation, that cannot be replicated no matter how skilled the translator. World Literature, on the other hand, emphasizes what is *gained* in translation. It considers how works change as they move between languages, time periods, and cultural contexts. This position has been most convincingly articulated by David Damrosch, who argues that World Literature is “writing that *gains* in translation,” and proposes translatability, or the ability to gain rather than lose in translation, as a condition that allows works to become successful examples of World Literature (Damrosch 2003: 281, emphasis mine). What guarantees works’ circulation beyond their immediate audiences is an inherent quality, a certain malleability that allows them to be transposed to new contexts. Texts that are too locally specific or too rigid in their form—in other words, texts that are too resistant to translation—fail to achieve world-literary status and are condemned to a more “local” existence. “Some works are so inextricably connected to their original language and moment that they really cannot be effectively translated at all,” Damrosch writes. Their translation either results in substantial loss of meaning or their cultural assumptions are not legible in other contexts, “so they remain largely within their local or national context, never achieving an effective life as world literature” (289).

World Literature’s critical impetus has been to diversify the canon and look beyond nationally demarcated considerations of literature towards a more plural, transnational understanding of literary study. It is no wonder then that in Damrosch’s argument World Literariness is defined as the ability to transcend temporal and / or spatial boundaries. However, I would like to propose that it is not always a local or national specificity, but ironically, a *transnational* engagement that renders some works difficult to translate into other contexts. Rather than local insularity, what excludes some works from World Literature’s modes of circulation is precisely a multicultural, polyvocal local reality.⁶

⁵ Critics like Apter and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have pointed out that World Literature runs the risk of flattening difference by introducing all texts through an easily accessible English, and creates the illusion that something called “the world” is out there for English speakers to consume. See Spivak (2003) *Death of a Discipline*.

⁶ David Gramling’s argument in his 2016 work *The Invention of Monolingualism* seems to support this point. Gramling explains that the notion of self-contained and separate languages was not always the norm and instead describes how this notion came about. He suggests that standards of “world literariness” uphold a “translational monolingualism” (10). Rather than muddling national and linguistic distinctions, this translational monolingualism

In *Tol*, Uyurkulak takes a nationally specific plot and, through the use of a specific language and style, highlights the cacophonies even within this national specificity. *Tol* spans the length of a train ride from İstanbul to Diyarbakır, essentially traversing Turkey from West to East.⁷ The protagonist Yusuf is a *musahhih*, a redactor, who loses his job for what we surmise are political reasons. Drinking himself into an unconscious stupor after being fired, Yusuf wakes up to find himself on a train bound for Diyarbakır, a predominantly Kurdish city in Eastern Turkey. A mysterious drunkard is sitting next to him, who calls himself Şair.⁸ During the days-long train ride, Şair hands Yusuf short stories that take readers on a historical journey from the Menderes period in Turkey until the end of the 1990s.⁹ In these polyvocal, fragmented stories, what primarily strikes readers is the continuity and pervasiveness of political violence, its brutality. Both the protagonists of the novel we hold in our hands, and the protagonists of the stories Yusuf is reading, are revolutionaries: disappointed, defeated leftist revolutionaries who cannot find themselves a place or purpose in twenty-first-century Turkey. In fact, the whole novel can be read as a narrative that details the destruction of the Turkish Left in the aftermath of three brutal coups in the twentieth century—in 1960, 1971, and 1980 respectively.¹⁰

To narrate this national history, Uyurkulak devises a colloquial and cacophonous style that derives its power and humor from the ways in which Turkish language and culture interact with the outside world. *Tol*'s content is insistently multicultural in this sense. It relies on a particular framework constructed of Turkish *and* global cultural references, using a humor that derives its punchlines from the ways in which a globalized pop culture circulates and is consumed within Turkey. This contemporary language and style convey the transnational dialogues that make it impossible to see Turkish literature only as Turkish and reveal the plural and syncretic dynamics that exist within all national frameworks. While this plural framework challenges Turkish nationalist myths of purity and homogeneity, it also asserts a cultural specificity that pushes back against flattening and tokenizing dynamics of world-literary circulation.

retains the illusion of self-contained languages (and, by extension, literary contexts). For more on this question, see especially the Introduction and Chapter 3.

⁷ Murat Uyurkulak (2002) *Tol: Bir İntikam Romanı*. All translations of the novel mine unless otherwise indicated.

⁸ Şair is a moniker the character has given himself and means “the poet.”

⁹ Adnan Menderes (1899–1961) was the founder of the Democrat Party and held the position of Prime Minister between 1950–1960. He is considered responsible for the İstanbul Pogroms, or “6–7 Eylül,” the targeted attacks against the Greek minority that took place in 1955. He was hanged in 1961, after the 1960 coup.

¹⁰ For the simple reason that Uyurkulak's novel was published in 2002, I will not be focusing in this analysis on the July 15, 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, which destroyed many existing “coup paradigms” in a country tragically well-versed in coups.

What makes Uyrkulak's work resistant to translation, then, is its cacophony and plurality. These tensions are signaled by the novel's title, which contains a word that resists translation and transposition. "Tol," a word that appears as is in the French and Italian translations, is not a Turkish word, but a Kurdish one. While its meaning can easily be rendered as "revenge" in English, the brief but intense cacophony it creates pushes translation to its limits precisely because it articulates a repressed plurality within the Turkish language and the Turkish national imaginary.

Turkish Literature: Stuck in Translation

Exploring such moments of untranslatability provides an opportunity to interrogate Turkish literature's position within World Literature. Turkish literature's marginality can in part be attributed to the logic of global literary markets and politics of translation.¹¹ However, as scholars like Jale Parla and Nergis Ertürk have convincingly shown, it also results from the peculiar history of the Turkish language. Founded in 1923 after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey spent its first decade undergoing extensive Westernization reforms, a series of nationalist and modernizing efforts spearheaded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Perhaps the most effective of these reforms was the Language Reform of 1928, famously termed a "catastrophic success" by Geoffrey Lewis.¹² The reform changed the alphabet from Arabic to Latin, in line with the decidedly *non*-Eastern and *non*-Ottoman new identity and culture envisioned for the Turkish nation.

The Turkish Language Reform was in essence designed to create a new *national* language for the emerging Turkish nation-state. Nergis Ertürk traces the reform back to nineteenth century communications reforms that tried to address the perceived "insufficiency of 'Arabic' writing to represent 'Turkish' sounds" (Ertürk 2011: 9). As Ertürk explains, the nineteenth-century reforms targeted an indeterminacy within Ottoman Turkish, which was "a crucial condition of possibility for the development of Ottoman Turkish as an *imperial composite and cosmopolitan language*" (13, emphasis mine). In other words, by attempting to fix this indeterminacy, the nineteenth-century reforms also implicitly targeted the composite and cosmopolitan aspects of the (imperial) language. The suppression of the unstable pluralities of Ottoman Turkish was also about suppressing the cultural and ethnic diversity that was now perceived as destabilizing. Ertürk writes that the same identarian logic fueled the Turkish Language Reform of 1928 and was "intolerant above all of what we might call mingled supranational affiliation" (14).

¹¹ For more on these questions, see Apter (2008: 94–109), and Pascale Casanova's (2007) *The World Republic of Letters*, especially Chapters 3 and 4.

¹² Geoffrey Lewis (2002) *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success*. See also Seran Doğançay-Aktuna (1995) "An Evaluation of the Turkish Language Reform After 60 Years."

These parallels between linguistic stability and national homogeneity can also be seen in the attempts in the 1930s to make the public use of Greek, Armenian, Kurdish and other Anatolian languages anathema. Campaigns with slogans such as “Vatandaş, Türkçe Konuş!” (“Citizen! Speak Turkish!”) were designed to strengthen the new Turkish language forged by the language reform and served a repressive nationalism that created the sense that the condition of being a Turkish citizen was Turkish monolingualism, an idea that was reinforced on the level of policy when non-Muslim minority schools were shut down and ethnolinguistic minorities were denied the right to receive an education in their native language (Dickinson 2014: 121).¹³

Similarly, the *Öztürkçe* (pure-Turkish) movement of the 1930s attempted to repress linguistic diversity to control the perceived instabilities of ethnic plurality, by systematically purging Turkish of Ottoman words, which were then replaced by what Jale Parla terms a “newspeak” (Parla 2008: 28). In this case, the target was not just plurality, but linguistic and cultural reminders of an Ottoman, and therefore “Eastern” and Muslim past, at odds with the nationalist project of creating a Westernized Turkish identity. In addition to repressing the plurality of languages within the Republic of Turkey, the language reforms endorsed a notion of Turkish as self-contained, also by excising Arabic and Persian words seen as traces of an unwanted Ottoman past (Ertürk 2011: 14).

Turkish language is therefore fraught with questions of translatability and indeterminacy. Trying to sever its ties with a Muslim, “Eastern” identity, hurtling itself in a leap of faith to the “Western” world with new letters, the language that was created for the new Turkish nation can be considered a language perpetually *stuck in translation*. Molded through top-down reforms, Turkish contains the tension of multiple binaries, Eastern and Western, Arabic and Latin, pure and syncretic. As Ertürk’s work forcefully shows, Turkish is a language that has constructed itself out of a problem of comparison and translation (Ertürk 2008: 42–43). If this is indeed the case, Murat Uyrkulak’s *Tol* can be seen as a work that successfully and purposefully demonstrates this problem within Turkish language and history, at the expense of its own circulation. Uyrkulak’s style and language perform the ingrained cacophony in Turkish language and national identity, both against Turkish nationalist myths of uniformity and against a World Literature paradigm that posits uniform understandings of literary contexts, in its desire to include them in its modes of circulation. Given that World Literature’s critical impetus has been to challenge nationally constructed notions of literature and language, the transnational resistance to translation that I describe here raises questions not only about the logic of world-literary markets, but also about the ability of World Literature as a field of study to make ethical and political interventions against nationalist myths of homogeneity.

¹³ On the question of language policies in Turkey, see also Yılmaz Çolak (2004) “Language Policy and Official Ideology in Early Republican Turkey.”

Uyurkulak's *Tol* and Resistance to Translation

Murat Uyurkulak's *Tol* was published in 2002 to critical acclaim in Turkey. Uyurkulak has since written two other novels, *Har: Bir Kıyamet Romanı* (2006) (*Har: A Doomsday Novel*) and *Merhume* (2016) (*The Deceased*), as well as a collection of short stories titled *Bazuka* (2011) (*Bazooka*). Uyurkulak's works are unequivocal in their political engagement and openly align themselves with leftist politics. *Tol* details the collapse of the Turkish Left in the aftermath of the three military interventions in the second half of the twentieth century, while *Har* focuses on the plight of those pushed to the margins of society in a fictional country called "Netamiye."¹⁴ Readers can easily identify Netamiye as modern-day Turkey, with many of the marginalized groups explicitly evoking ethnic minorities within Turkey.¹⁵ *Tol* and *Har* established Uyurkulak as a unique voice within Turkish literature. While their explicit political focus is not new or surprising, the blending of fantasy, slang, and history stands out in Turkish literature, which has historically favored realism, especially in the case of politically committed literature.¹⁶

Turkish literary historian Berna Moran points out that early Ottoman novelists like Namık Kemal and Ahmet Mithat favored "the [Western] novel" as superior to Ottoman storytelling traditions primarily because of its realism (Moran 1983: 10–11). Influenced by such ideas, early Turkish novels of the first two decades of the twentieth century were predominantly realist as well, a trend that continued with the Republican novels of the 1930s and 1940s. The realism of the Republican novel aligned with the didactic role entrusted to literature in this period, which was mobilized in the service of nation-building. The emergence of the Anatolian novel in the 1950s coincided with the emergence of socialist realism, which was adopted to communicate social inequalities and depict an "Anatolian consciousness."¹⁷ Erdağ Göknar argues that the desire to express an "Anatolian consciousness" corresponded to the spread of socialist ideals in Turkey, making socialist realism an important tool in the Turkish novels of the period (Göknar 2008: 490). In fact, in the aftermath of the 1971 coup, Turkish literature of the 1970s was almost completely dominated by socialist realism, most notably in the case of the "12 March novels," so named after the date of the coup. Charged with the task of explaining to the masses the leftist cause and the plight of the

¹⁴ *Har* has been translated into German in 2013. See Uyurkulak (2013) *Glut. Ein Roman der Apokalypse*, translated by Sabine Adatepe.

¹⁵ For more on *Har* as a fantastic fiction of "otherness," see Gürle, "Cinema Grande."

¹⁶ *Bazuka* and *Merhume* are also politically committed works, but do not take the same stylistic and political risks as do Uyurkulak's first two novels. *Bazuka* is a collection of short stories, almost all of which deal with violence in some way, but the stories are surprisingly didactic. *Merhume*, on the other hand, attempts to put forth a criticism of masculinity, with varying degrees of success.

¹⁷ Jale Parla suggests that Yaşar Kemal might be the exception to this rule in Anatolian novels, because he experimented with language to find the proper vehicle for communicating this consciousness (2008: 32).

leftists, most 12 March novels used a didactic, socialist-realist style to prioritize clarity and communication, rather than literary experimentation.¹⁸ As a result, it would be accurate to say that Turkish literature has been dominated by realism, from the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1980 coup.¹⁹

The repression and brutality of the 1980 coup caused a turn away from realism, which resulted in a shift towards aesthetic and linguistic experimentation.²⁰ Jale Parla notes that in the aftermath of the 1980 coup, “the language of the magazine media, the colloquialisms of pop and arabesque music, the underground argot created by humorists, advertising idiom, and Americanized yuppie expressions signifying career-oriented, hedonistic lifestyles invaded the cultural sphere and undermined the status of standard Turkish” (Parla 2008: 34). Coming some two decades after the coup, Uyurkulak’s works can still be seen within the context of this shift, which ushered in what is considered “the Turkish postmodern.” What distinguishes Uyurkulak’s works in this category, however, is their immersion in this underground argot, while continuing in their plotlines the tradition of the coup novels. Uyurkulak simultaneously adopts and adapts the quintessential “political novels” of Turkish literature and gives them a new language. Gökner terms Uyurkulak’s colloquial style, laden with contemporary cultural references, that of “something of an underground novel” (Gökner 2008: 500).

The “underground” and edgy aspects of Uyurkulak’s novels have quite a bit in common with the authors of *Afili Filintalar*, a loosely defined literary grouping that came to prominence in Turkey in the early 2000s.²¹ Uyurkulak himself was a member until 2013, writing frequently for the group’s blog. He left in 2013 in the aftermath of the Gezi Protests, citing his discontent with the

¹⁸ For more on 12 March novels, see Çimen Günay-Erkol (2011) “Taş Üstüne Taş Koymak: 12 Mart Romanlarında Görgü Tanığı Belleğinin Yazınsallaştırılması” [Fictionalization of Eyewitness Memory in March 12 Novels]; Çimen Günay-Erkol (2016) *Broken Masculinities: Solitude, Alienation, and Frustration in Turkish Literature After 1970*; Murat Belge (1994) “12 Mart Romanları.”

¹⁹ The 1980 coup is considered the most brutal military coup in Turkish history, and arguably the one with most persistent effects. After the coup the military established a regime that lasted until 1983, when they turned power over to a civilian government. However, the constitutional changes that were made during these three years proved long-lasting, dictating political life in Turkey well into the twenty-first century.

²⁰ Both Gökner and Parla argue that the move away from realism was a result of the untenability of grand narratives of nationalism in the aftermath of the coup. See Gökner (2008: 496–499) and Parla (2008: 34). Writer Şükrü Argın also points to the shattering of the social conscience in Turkey as leading to a fragmentation and diversity in literature after the 1980 coup. See Şükrü Argın (2008) “Şükrü Argın ile Söyleşi: ‘Edebiyat 12 Eylül’ü Kalben Destekledi.” [Interview with Şükrü Argın: Literature Inwardly Enabled 12 September].

²¹ “Afili Filintalar” can be translated as “Snazzy Young Guns.” Admittedly, the phrase sounds much more natural in Turkish, but it is equally ostentatious. “Afili” means showy, while “Filinta” is the slang used to refer to good looking men. Literally, however, “filinta” also means shotgun. The obvious conflation of guns and masculinity informed the aesthetics of the group as well, whose famous initial picture showed the authors (all men at that point), standing next to one another in a pose akin to the lineup of *The Usual Suspects*, with one of the authors, Murat Menteş, holding a gun. The group’s cult of masculinity finds its way into Murat Uyurkulak’s novels as well.

group's failure to collectively and emphatically criticize the AKP government's use of violence against protesters. Alongside Uyurkulak, Afili Filintalar's blog featured writers like Murat Menteş and Alper Canıgüz, who write absurdist, exaggeratedly masculine narratives laden with slang, as well as with pop-cultural and social-media references. By mocking everything, the absurdist works of these authors put forth an implicit critique of "the system."²² In Uyurkulak, however, the object of the critique is defined and given a history. Rather than attacking a vague notion of "the man" or "the system," Uyurkulak combines absurdism and humor with aspects from the earlier Turkish Leftist novels, to construct a critique specifically of the violence and repression of the Turkish state. In Uyurkulak's style, the moments of absurdity and meaninglessness become means to represent violence and trauma.

Unlike most Turkish coup narratives, *Tol* is a metafictional, self-reflexive work. During the first few pages of the novel, the readers cannot quite understand how Şair found Yusuf, or why he brought him along on the train to the southeastern city of Diyarbakır. Yusuf assumes Şair is a perfect stranger, a crazy poet wanting to share some obscure writings with him. It soon becomes clear, however, that Şair's stories are as much about Yusuf as they are about Şair. They detail the lives of Yusuf's parents, neither of whom Yusuf knew very well. Yusuf's father Oğuz disappeared when his mother was still pregnant with Yusuf, and his mother committed suicide when Yusuf was seven (Uyurkulak 2002: 11). Şair, however, was friends with both of them, and became Yusuf's travel companion deliberately, not by coincidence. The stories he hands Yusuf suggest that Oğuz is still alive and living in Diyarbakır, their destination. But at the end of the novel, we also find out that Şair has been handing the stories to Yusuf to make sense of them himself. In fact, Yusuf has been editing and rewriting Şair's stories. On the penultimate page of the novel he asks Şair, "Beğendin mi yazdığım hikayeleri?" ("Do you like the stories I wrote?"). Şair replies, "Hiç fena değil ama ben bir anlattıysam, sen üzerine beş katmışsın" ("Not bad at all, but if I told you one thing, it seems like you multiplied it by five"). "Kitap yazmak o kadar kolay mı?" Yusuf snaps, "Adamın çarkına sığar. Görmedin mi, ölümlerden döndüm senin hikayelerini adam edeceğim, birbirine bağlayacağım diye. Öyle gaza gelip iki mısra attırmaya benzemez bu işler..." ("Do you think it's easy to write a book? It fucks you up! Didn't you see how I almost killed myself trying to turn your stories into something, to connect them to one another? This is not like getting all fired up and pissing out a couple poetic verses", Uyurkulak 2002: 261). At the end, then, the novel

²² Alper Canıgüz's 2008 novel *Gizli Ajans* (The Secret Agency), which is currently in its twelfth printing, is about an advertising agency spearheaded by a cat, who turns out to be the Devil. When the narrator Musa finds out that the agency is part of an alien conspiracy to destroy the world, he tries to rise to the challenge but cannot remain sober long enough to come up with a serious plan. Menteş's 2005 novel *Dublörün Dilemması* (The Dilemma of a Stunt Man), now in its twenty-fifth printing, tells the story of two friends who copy faces, a technology designed to create the illusion that people can be in more than one place at once. They quickly find themselves sucked into a murder plot and become inadvertent detectives.

is also about the impossibility of distinguishing fact from fiction, and what it means to read, write and interpret stories.

This metafictional approach and its linguistic and stylistic experimentation mark an important departure from the tradition of socialist-realist coup narratives from the 1970s, the so-called 12 March novels that have become synonymous with coup literature in Turkey. The novel adapts and gently mocks the figure of the leftist hero of the 12 March novels: the serious, committed revolutionary who has a habit of delivering idealist and at times out-of-place lectures to anyone who will listen. While these heroes appear entirely devoid of self-awareness in the 12 March novels, charged with the difficult task of communicating the principles of “the leftist cause” and the price the state exacted for it, in *Uyurkulak* these heroes recognize their own awkwardness. They appear old-fashioned, dogmatic, slightly pathetic, but the novel also presents these characters as society’s only hopes for resistance against a broken, violent system. Unlike 12 March novels, which betray a belief in the communicability of trauma through conventional language, for his traumatized anti-heroes *Uyurkulak* constructs a rambling, fragmented language. In Erdal Öz’s 1974 novel *Yaralısin* (You Are Wounded), for instance, a first-person narrative of torture, the tortured and traumatized narrator could remember and recount every detail of torture in excruciating detail, without ever lacking the words for his experience. While Öz’s narrative fully recognized the trauma of torture, it assumed language remained intact under trauma.²³ In the case of Şair and *Tol*’s other violated and traumatized characters, in contrast, the violence and trauma of torture break language, turning it into a type of nonsense that is nevertheless capable of imparting wisdom. Far from mocking the characters’ rambling, the novel seems to postulate this “nonsense” as an ethical imperative. The novel seems to suggest that the moral and ethical response to Turkish state violence should have been to go mad and ramble, rather than normalizing violence. As a result, even as *Tol* thematically relies on the literary tradition of socialist-realist coup narratives, it develops these familiar themes through a drastically different ethical framework and language. Its subtle metafiction and its attention to the relationship between violence and language are markedly different from most other examples of Turkish coup literature.²⁴

Attention to the ethics of reading and writing are signaled immediately by the protagonists themselves. For Yusuf, language is a constant source of pain, inextricably linked with guilt and shame as a result of brutal state violence. As we find out, Yusuf used to be a poet too, but his self-proclaimed “failure” during his torture changed the course of his life. He “talked” during his

²³ See Günay-Erkol (2016: 53–73) and Başak Çandar (2012) “Writing Torture: Erdal Öz’s *Yaralısin*.”

²⁴ One notable exception is Bilge Karasu, whose works pointedly interrogate the ethics and dynamics of language. His 1985 novel *Gece* (*Night*) especially explores the relationship between language and violence. The novel was translated to English in 1994. See Karasu (1994) *Night*, translated by Güneli Gün.

torture, “talking” emerging here as a euphemism for confessing: “Günün birinde dilimden bazı sokak adları, kapı numaraları, insan isimleri döküldü ve o ilahi ses kesildi, bir daha da hiç duyulmadı” (“one day, some street names, door numbers, names fell from my tongue, and that divine voice [of inspiration] stopped, never to be heard again”, Uyurkulak 2002: 14). This linguistic slip under extreme physical pain marks the end of his aspirations as a poet. Although the novel does not explicitly suggest a connection between this lapse and Yusuf’s eventual career as a *musahhih*, a redactor²⁵, it seems significant that a man who could not control his words under torture would choose a job that gives him the ability to impose an order on others’ words, to control them as best as he can.²⁶ Şair, on the other hand, has replaced his name with a moniker that defines him through his relation to words: “poet.” As a result, the novel actively reflects upon the relationship between violence and language, and upon what it means to write and read about violence and trauma.

The tension between violence and language fuels much of the novel’s linguistic experimentation. When Yusuf gives a list of sounds that turn into tastes he finally mentions “aniden sert bir tekme atılan kemiğin kırılışı” (“the breaking of a bone that has been suddenly kicked hard”, Uyurkulak 2002: 21). The earlier examples, like “the edge of a darbouka whose skin has been pulled too tightly,” are assigned sounds like “Tleklökke, Tleklökke, Tleklökke,” which do not resemble any Turkish word. However, the sound of a breaking of bone is written as “kemikkk, kemikkk, kemikkk,” replicating the Turkish word for bone, “kemik,” and adding a few extra “k”s at the end. Elaine Scarry convincingly argues in *The Body in Pain* that extreme physical pain is incommunicable because it destroys language, taking the victim to a state anterior to language where moans and sounds become the only means of communicating pain (Scarry 1985: 28). The repetition of the word “kemik” in this instance can be interpreted in similar terms: as a visual representation of physical violence overtaking language. The sound and the violence behind it can

²⁵ Musahhih is an old Turkish word, and its use in lieu of the more contemporary “editör,” or the slightly awkward but more immediately understandable “düzeltmen” (“düzeltmek” is to “correct,” making düzeltmen immediately understandable as “corrector”) is significant. It introduces the kind of cacophony that exists in almost all late-twentieth-century Turkish novels, which contain a combination of what we might consider old and new Turkish words, which can be accessed fairly easily by most readers born in the 1950s and earlier, while the younger generations almost always come across words that they might not be familiar with. To what extent this cacophony is disappearing in Turkish literature with old Turkish becoming more obsolete as years pass is an interesting question that might be complicated further by the current neo-Ottomanist and religious bent of the ruling AKP government.

²⁶ The opening pages of the novel immediately establish a concern with words and language, too. The opening paragraphs discuss Yusuf’s mother’s foul mouth, which also looks like a “buruşuk yara,” a wrinkled scar, because of a childhood accident that burned half her face. Every time she opened her mouth, Yusuf remembers, she repeated the same words: “Bizi düzdüler. Çocuklarımızı da düzecekler. İçlerinde ne kadar tarih, dua, silah ve dahi şan varsa üzerimize kusacaklar” (“They screwed us. They will screw our children too. They will vomit on us whatever history, prayer, gun, and glory they have inside....”, Uyurkulak 2002, 11). In the opening pages Yusuf also imagines his dejection through metaphors about publishing, arguing that while he used to be “the headlines,” now he finds himself to be “11-font” (17).

only be transmitted through the replication of the name of the object this violence attacks and breaks: kemik.

The novel's understanding of this destructive relationship between violence and language is highlighted further in its brief but brutal narrative of the aftermath of the 1980 coup. When Yusuf reads the story in which Şair's commune building is razed after the coup, *Tol* gives the readers its most violent and simultaneously most fragmented descriptions. Most of the people living in the commune are killed, and women are raped (including Şair's lover Esmer).²⁷ This shocking, disorienting violence is narrated in one short paragraph that communicates the trauma through the breakdown of language, rather than through a description of violence:

Ve sabahı ezip geliyorlar. Toplarıyla,
tüfekleriyle, kasaturalarıyla, hınçlarıyla
geliyorlar. Hepsi çok iri, hepsi çok haki.
Başlarına yeşilli sarılı bezler sarılı, yüzlerine
siyah yağlar sürülü, postalları kocaman, bir karış
eninde palaskaları, kn kırmızı madlyonları,
yüzkleri, kn dondran gülşleri...

Vhşi bir dörtgn çiziyorlr...Komutahne,
şkenchan, myhne, tecavzha...

Yakladkları gnçlri kurşn diz...Esmr'i, Sle'i,
KMam'yı, Brc'yu ve dğrlern mydna
sürkl...parç...soyy... . . .

Şr srünerk çıkıyor şknchndn...biri klna giriyor,
Salih, kamyonet az ileride...Hadi..hd...Şr
bakı...Esm...ğzndn kn kn...gözleri
bembeyaz...gzle bmbyz...

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa

(And they come razing down the morning. They
come with their cannons, rifles, bayonets, and
their spite. They are all too big, too green. They
have green and yellow cloths wrapped around
their heads, black grease painted on their faces,
enormous boots, wide knives, bld red medllions,
rngs, bld frzing smils....

They mke a wild rctngle... Commndhouse,
torturehs, winehous, rapehs...

They excute the young's... They drg Esmr, Sle,
KMam, Brc and others tthe squire...
tear...undrss...

Pt crwls out of the torturehs...someone takes
hisarm, Salih, the truck is just over there. Come
on...cmn... Pt looks... Esm... inermouth bld
bld... her eyes all white.... eys llwhite....

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa").
(Uyurkulak 2002: 191)

Most of the words used in the paragraph are not complete words at all, each of them missing multiple vowels. The names of the women who were dragged to the square and raped, Esmer, Selen, Kira Mama Neba, and Burcu turn into Esmr, Sle, KMam, Brc. Şair is no longer; he crawls

²⁷ Esmer means "brown" or "dark-skinned," and it can be used to describe complexion as well as hair color.

out of the torture chamber as Şr. As Meltem Gürle notes, the paragraph mimics the shorthand language used in text messages or social media.²⁸ But the letters that drop out of words out of expedience in social media fall off in this paragraph under the stress of a shocking violence, their absence a sign of the effects of violence on language. These mangled but recognizable words communicate violence while also conveying the sense that the experience of this violence can never be *fully* communicated, only intimated. If, as Scarry argues, extreme physical pain and its trauma bring the victim to a state anterior to language, this paragraph can be said to visually represent this undoing of language. Just as the person and body in pain scream and make sounds without using words, this paragraph makes words scream. In their inability to emerge as full words, these combinations of letters force us to see the horrifying effects of violence on language and representation. What is left at the end is only a sound: a long Aaaaaaaaaa that goes on and on, in a striking juxtaposition to the mutilated, shortened words of the paragraph before it.

Needless to say, linguistic experimentation is always a challenge for translation. Both in the aforementioned examples, and in countless others in the text, Uyurkulak plays with language, constructs new words, mangles old ones, and creates a new language of marginality, insanity, and trauma. I point out *Tol*'s linguistic idiosyncrasies to demonstrate the novel's active engagement with language, its sharp criticism of Turkish state violence through its plot as well as its language. But I also emphasize such moments to distinguish *a difficult translation* from what I consider *a resistance to translation*. The examples above are certainly difficult to translate and push translators to their creative limits, but they do not constitute limit cases that can be understood as deliberately resistant to translation. In fact, the above paragraph has been effectively translated in previous translations of *Tol*. In the following German translation by Gerhard Meier, for instance, vowels similarly drop out of words, culminating in a drawn-out scream of "A"s at the end of the paragraph, producing an equivalent, if not identical, effect:

²⁸ Meltem Gürle (2009) "Edebiyatımızın 'Kekeme Çingenesi': Bir Minör Edebiyatçı olarak Murat Uyurkulak," ("The Stuttering Gypsy" of Our Literature: Murat Uyurkulak as Author of Minor Literature"). Gürle writes, "Kitabın dönüm noktası olan 12 Eylül'e geldiğimde, yazarın, bu kadar ağır bir tecrübeyi aktarmak için ne tür bir dil kullanacağını merak ediyordum. Bulduğu dili görünce, nefesimi tuttum. Çünkü bu dil tanıdık bir yerden başlıyor ama tansiyon arttıkça şirazesinden çıkıyor ve dağılıyordu. Uyurkulak, telefon mesajlarından ve internetten tanıdığım bir ifade biçimini alıyor ve onu bambaşka bir şeye dönüştürüyordu. Bu dilin, anlattığı hikayeyle bir araya geldiğinde yarattığı karşılık öyle güçlüydü ki, neredeyse fiziksel olarak sarsıldığımı hatırlıyorum." ("When I reached the novel's turning point, September 12th, I was curious to see what type of language the author would use to impart such a traumatic experience. When I saw the language he invented, I held my breath. Because this language started in a familiar manner, but as the tension increased, it went off the rails and fragmented. Uyurkulak took expressions I recognized from text messages and the internet, and turned them into something entirely different. When combined with the story he was telling, this language created such a strong effect that I remember almost physically shaking.")

Wn sie erwshn, der wrd erschn...Esmr, Sle, KMam, Brc und die ndern schlpn sie in d
Knpe zersch... ausz ... nchndr... imr wdr... stdnlg schlg... zwshn bnen blt ... brst
zerschn.

Şr krcht aus dem Fltrhs hers... jmd nmt si m Arm, Salih, der Lieferwagen dort drüben...
Los... Is...Şr scht ... Esm ... Blt as dm Mnd ... weiße Augen... wß Agn.

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa (Uyurkulak 2008: 243)

What I consider to be resistant to translation in Uyurkulak *are not* these moments of linguistic experimentation, but rather moments of cultural and linguistic plurality. In his article “Macaronics as What Eludes Translation,” Haun Saussy describes such instances as the “Other” of translation, which prove resistant to translation not just because of their linguistic complexity or particularity, but because they conflate different linguistic, political, cultural contexts. In Uyurkulak’s *Tol*, what resists translation are precisely such examples of brief and intense cacophony, which in turn highlight the transnational, multilingual dialogues that go on in any given linguistic or literary context. For Saussy, this Other of translation is “vanishingly close to translation, so much so that it is often mistaken for translation . . . it has its distinct effects; it makes us do different things and engage with bits of the world in a different way” (Saussy 2015: 215). These ruptures in conventional translation are important for Saussy because they reveal the clash of different yet coexisting linguistic and cultural contexts, a sort of cacophony. This cacophony, I would like to argue, is a crucial element in *Tol*.

Haun Saussy’s example of such cacophonous moments in language is the appearance of foreign words in a text. Saussy argues that “When foreign words appear in a text, they make it *macaronic*: a patchwork, a hybrid, a graft. The act being performed by the writer is not one of translation, but of *transcription*, inscription or imposition, much as if the writer were simply inventing a new word (‘impositio nominum’).” Perhaps predictably, Saussy discusses a paragraph from James Joyce’s *Ulysses* to prove his point: a paragraph in which the French words “chausson” and “flan Breton” appear in the original English text. The French translation leaves them as is, because, Saussy argues, “the words are literally untranslatable into French. What is *also* impossible to render into French is the effect of foreignness that those two French expressions had when appearing in the middle of a paragraph of English prose” (Saussy 2015: 216). Saussy’s “also” is rather strange in this context, since what renders the paragraph untranslatable seems to derive precisely from the inability to replicate this effect of foreignness. Of course, a translator might choose to translate these words into English for the French translation, and examples of this technique abound in translation. But this wouldn’t replicate *the* sense of foreignness present in the text—the sense of reading French words within the context of English—instead creating a new sense of foreignness, that of reading English in the context of French.

As I briefly explained in the introduction, in *Tol* the macaronics are in fact embedded into the title. As should be apparent from the translation of the title with which I began, *Tol: A Revenge Novel*, based on the original *Tol: Bir İntikam Romanı*, the word “Tol” itself resists translation, not because it does not have an English equivalent but because it constitutes the kind of “Other” Saussure designates to be the result of linguistic and cultural cacophony. “Tol” is not a Turkish word, but a Kurdish one meaning “revenge.”²⁹ While the word is quite translatable as “revenge,” its function as a Kurdish word when placed next to the Turkish words that spell out “A Revenge Novel” proves impossible to translate. The tension that the title *performs* through the coexistence of Kurdish and Turkish to state the idea of revenge is entirely and inevitably lost in translation. Not only is it lost, but it actively resists translation through the particularity of the relationship and history between Turkish and Kurdish languages. Kurdish, the native language of over 10 million citizens of the Republic of Turkey, has been de facto criminalized in Turkey. Today the taboo surrounding Kurdish continues, perhaps not as strongly in its uses in private capacities, but certainly in its official uses, as well as in classrooms or courtrooms. When transposed to another linguistic context in translation, this particularity loses its political, historical, and cultural echoes and its performative power.

Perhaps as an acknowledgement of this resistance, the new Italian translation of *Tol* by Luis Miguel Selvelli kept the word as is, simply translating the designation after the colon: *Tol: storia di una vendetta* (Uyurkulak 2016). Jean Descat’s French translation simply left the title as *Tol*, while Meier’s German translation used the title *Zorn*, which means wrath or anger. In all four cases – Italian, French, German, and my English translation here—the pointed provocation suggested by the combination of Turkish and Kurdish to pronounce “revenge” disappears in translation, precisely because the layers of meaning and implications opened up by this pairing and by this word are historically and culturally specific, shaped through a long history of state violence in Turkey that targeted Kurds, their language, and their culture. As the title demonstrates the multiplicity of languages within Turkish literature, it also performs the results of the official denial of this multiplicity: for a substantial portion of Uyurkulak’s readership, the word appears foreign and requires at least a brief research into its origins.³⁰ That it opens itself up much more readily to Kurdish readers from Turkey can also be seen as indicative of the novel’s and author’s politics of inclusion, the novel’s desire for revenge and defiance against myths of homogeneity and against the violence that has been wrought in the name of this myth. In this case, however, it is important

²⁹ Uyurkulak himself is not Kurdish and he has explained in various interviews that he is using the word as a “guest.” See Nazan Özcan (2002) “Deliler, Şairler ve Devrim.”

³⁰ Translations of the title are further complicated by Uyurkulak’s decision to split the novel into three sections, respectively titled “T”, “O”, and “L”. Gerhard Meier’s German translation, which changed the title to *Zorn*, navigated this difficulty by retitling the sections “First Part,” “Second Part,” etc. I am grateful to Dr. Burcu Karahan Richardson for her help interpreting the German translation.

to recognize that what resists translation is not a uniform national focus, but rather a polyvocal, plural correction to the myth of homogeneity that tests the assumptions of translatability. The “Other” of translation, what renders *Tol* not readily translatable and, therefore, stands in the way of its entry into World Literature’s canons, is not locality or uniformity in this case, but the coexistence of disparate, multicultural, multilingual contexts.

The novel repeatedly comes back to such cacophonies and multiplicities. In fact, the novel’s dark humor depends on its conflation of different contexts. In various interviews, Uyurkulak has insisted that his words and his viewpoints are unashamedly Turkish, but the Turkish identity, language, and culture that emerge in *Tol* are anything but pure or nationally specific.³¹ Instead, characters are constantly thinking about the world at large, making readers see not a purely “Turkish” culture, but a Turkishness understood as a point of view through which “other” cultural references are interpreted, consumed, circulated anew. In one of Şair’s stories, for instance, a rare scene of bliss unfolds during a gathering at a *meyhane*, a tavern. A drunken and blissful Şair raises his toast to another poet, Pablo Neruda, initiating the following conversation between two unnamed characters:

‘Kimdir lan bu Nureda?’

‘Mabel aldı ya lan, delinin anlattığı o memleketten. Hani şu Pişonik mi, puşt oğlu mudur nedir, onun dümdüz ettiği yerden.’ (Uyurkulak 2002: 135).

In Saussy’s terms, this exchange constitutes a sure moment of non-translation, where both the question and the answer butcher names precisely because they sound so foreign to Turkish ears, and mold them into something new based on the way they sound in Turkish. The question misspells Pablo Neruda’s name, asking “Who the hell is this Nureda,” while the answer, in an attempt to explain, misnames the “Nobel Prize” as “Mabel,” and says Neruda is from that country that “Pişonik or puşt oğlu,” (Pişonik or son of a bitch),³² “razed to the ground.” While Pişonik is yet another humorous Turkish misnaming of Pinochet, suggesting a (drunken) Turkish man’s inability to remember and pronounce this foreign name, the likening of this misnomer to “son of a bitch,”

³¹ Uyurkulak’s style and his characters who drink as an ethical necessity have occasioned frequent comparisons with the Beat Generation and Charles Bukowski. When asked about his opinion on such comparisons, Uyurkulak replied: “Kullandığım dilin bir ‘eda’ mahiyetinde Bukowski’ye benzer yanları olabilir. . . Sadece ona değil, Kerouac’a, Celine’e ve bilimum soydaş yazarlara benzerliği de vardır belki... Fakat ‘öz’ olarak benim kelimelerim Türkçe, Türkiyeli ve Doğuludur... Ben burada duruyorum ve durduğum yerden böyle yazıyorum.” (“The language I use might recall Bukowski... Not only Bukowski, but perhaps it might even have similarities with Kerouac, Celine, and a multitude of other kindred authors... But as an “essence,” my words are Turkish, from Turkey and Eastern. I stand here and I write the way I write from where I stand”). See Hamzan Aktan (2006) “‘Har’ı Seven Yalımına Katlanır.”

³² “Puşt oğlu” is a swear word that is akin to “son of a bitch” but literally translates to “son of a faggot.” There is much to be said about such moments and examples of aggressive and heteronormative masculinity in Uyurkulak’s works, which reinforces the Beat Generation comparisons.

“puşt oğlu,” is quite significant. The Turkish alliteration produced by the *ş* in the misnomer allows for this particular association, while also demonstrating the speaker’s leftist politics even as he cannot remember the name of Pinochet or the country he razed to the ground, Chile. Consequently, we cannot quite call this drunken character completely uninformed, since his mistakes reveal an awareness of the world outside of Turkey, regardless of its mispronunciation.

Despite its intensely violent and traumatic plot, *Tol* is undeniably funny, precisely because of these moments of dialogue between Turkey and the outside world, and between Turkish and other languages. This outside world is ever present in the imaginary of every character. Even at moments of confusion, these “foreign” references are not presented as inexplicable or alien, but as frameworks that characters regularly engage with and understand, but pidginize through and into a colloquial Turkish. These moments of “transnational cacophony” prove especially resistant to translation in *Tol* and challenge Damrosch’s criteria of success within the field of World Literature.

While *Tol* uses a myriad of references to American pop culture, these references are made sense of through an insistently Turkish framework in the novel. The coexisting clash is what essentially creates the humor. Appropriately, a tangential but very humorous exchange between Şair and Yusuf proves to be perhaps the most challenging “untranslatable” of the novel, effectively demonstrating what I mean by “transnational cacophony.” As Şair and Yusuf try to get to know each other on the train, Yusuf asks Şair “bütün bunların anlamı ne ve benden ne istiyorsun?,” (“what does all this mean, and what do you want from me?”) Şair considers the phrasing of the question too cliché, and instead of answering in earnest, asks “which film is this from?” Yusuf immediately grants Şair his point and explains to the readers: “binlerce Amerikan filmi seyretmişim ve yüzlercesinde bu cümleye rastlamak mümkündü” (“I had seen thousands of American movies and it was possible to come across this very sentence in hundreds of them”). What follows is a half-page dialogue that unfolds solely through dubbed American movie clichés:

‘Nasıl olduğunu bilirsin,’ dedim.

Hafifçe gülümsedi:

‘Bilirim. Başka?’

Rakı şişesini yere bıraktım.

İki elimi, Japonlar gibi birleştirip ileri geri sallayarak gürledim:

‘Biri bana burada neler olduğunu açıklayabilir mi?’

Tiz bir kahkaha attı bu kez.

‘Devam et, devam et’ diyordu bir yandan da.

Ben de salak gibi kıkırdamaya başlamıştım.

Abartılı bir neşe takındım:

(‘You know how it is,’ I said.

He smiled slightly:

‘I do. What else?’

I put down the rakı bottle.

Putting my hands together like the Japanese and shaking them back and forth, I roared:

‘Can someone explain to me what’s going on here?’

This time he let out a shrill laughter. He kept saying “go on, go on.” I had started to giggle like an idiot too.

I put on an exaggerated happiness:

'Hey ben Yusuf, sen de Şair olmalısın!' diye
bağırdım.
Kollarımı iki yana açıp omuzlarımı hafifçe
kaldırarak, 'Aslına bakarsanız, ne
söylediğiniz konusunda en ufak bir fikrim yok,'
diye fısıldadım ardından.
Gülmekten konuşmaya hali kalmamıştı.
Aniden ciddileştim, bir süre sustum, tam
kahkahaları hafiflerken, öne doğru
eğildim ve kurtsu, kısık bir sesle, 'Heey, sakın
benimle oyun oynama,' dedim.

'Hey, I'm Yusuf! And you must be the Poet!' I
yelled.
Opening my arms wide, I softly shrugged and
whispered, 'To tell you the truth, I have no idea
what you're talking about.'
He was laughing so hard he couldn't even talk.
All of a sudden I became serious, remained
silent for a moment. Just as his laughter
subsided, I leaned forward and with a raspy
whisper I said "Don't do anything stupid.")
(Uyurkulak 2002: 26–27)

This is quite a humorous exchange, but the humor arises from the characters' ability to speak like dubbed American film characters. What is being made fun of are not so much the clichés of American movies, but the clichés of Turkish *translations* of American movies. Translating these back into English results in the originals or their approximation, obscuring the specific humor that exists in the original dialogue. Similarly, regardless of how well the German, French, and Italian translators might translate this exchange, the particularity of the humor that arises from a long history of dubbing and subtitling in Turkish cinema and television cannot but be lost. The characters play with a Turkish "dubbese" here, familiar to most people who grew up watching television or films in Turkey in the twentieth century. What makes this exchange funny is a "translational" awkwardness, especially pertaining to English to Turkish cinematic translations.

How can translation work here, when it is asked to translate back into the original an exchange whose humor hinges on the foreignizing effects of translation? I see this exchange as forcefully demonstrating Saussure's notion of macaronics: as a patchwork dialogue that conveys the interaction and enmeshing of Turkish categories with foreign ones. While the title of the novel, *Tol*, shows a clash with more serious ethical and political stakes, this moment constitutes an example that humorously conflates multiple, transnational frameworks only to construct a humor that can most readily be experienced through a familiarity with a global pop culture *as it is experienced in Turkey*. This seemingly more light-hearted clash proves perhaps even more challenging for translation than the title itself, and more capable of exposing translation's limits, especially when faced with a transnational, culturally cacophonous style.

Conclusion

For David Damrosch, a text must travel and translate well in order to become a successful work of World Literature. It must gain, rather than lose, in translation. Damrosch argues that this

“balance of credit and loss” is “a distinguishing mark of national versus world literature: literature stays within its national or regional tradition when it usually loses in translation, whereas works become world literature when they gain on balance in translation” (Damrosch 2003: 289). World literature needs to be able to speak to different linguistic, historical, cultural contexts. In this notion of World Literature, the ability to travel and translate well is postulated as the antithesis of local insularity. But what happens when the local is transnational, plural, and cacophonous? The “Turkish context” *Tol* depicts is anything but nationally specific or monolingual. Instead, it is insistently polyvocal and multicultural.

Damrosch's arguments have certainly provided a useful framework through which to understand and discuss why some works “make it” in the field of World Literature and some fail. My goal is not to challenge this concept wholesale but to interrogate its implications. It is true that works that circulate have to be “translatable,” but I am not at all sure that translatability is an indication of global connectedness, or the antithesis of local specificity. As Uyurkulak's *Tol* reveals through its particular resistance to translation, a work's success in blending local and global cultural references, multiple languages, and linguistic codes results in texts that are anything *but* easily translatable. Damrosch himself allows for this possibility when he mentions Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* as a very global work, “conceptually speaking,” but argues that it does not travel very well. It is so “intricate and irreproducible that it becomes a sort of curiosity in translation” (Damrosch 2003: 289). However, Damrosch leaves the implications of this type of untranslatability, which seem quite significant to me, curiously unexplored. If works that insistently transcend and muddle national boundaries lose more in translation and therefore fail to achieve world-literary status, what does this mean for World Literature's ability to challenge nationalist projects?³³ How does this type of untranslatability affect World Literature's tokenizing tendencies, which scholars like Gayatri Spivak have repeatedly criticized?

In *The Invention of Monolingualism*, David Gramling argues that “world-literary authors are required in the twenty-first century to ‘do their language’ in a strategically centripetal way, one that eases the process of translation while nonetheless fulfilling the representational service into which ethnicity or national communion were once pressed in the twentieth century” (Gramling 2016: 135). The favoring of authors with more “translatable” styles of writing leave “multilingual, code-blending fictions [...] in the lurch” (142). Alongside Gramling, I would argue that this preference for “translatable styles,” or for texts that gain rather than lose in translation, suppresses the messy pluralities of language within the field of World Literature. To the extent that these

³³ Similarly, Franco Moretti offers resistance against nationally demarcated approaches to literature as the only justifiable purpose of the study of world literature: “The point is that there is no other justification for the study of world literature (and for the existence of departments of comparative literature) but this: to be a thorn in the side, a permanent intellectual challenge to national literatures — especially the local literature” (Moretti 2000: 68).

pluralities oftentimes reflect an even more complicated cultural plurality, the inadvertent preference for translation as “a balance of credit” as Damrosch terms it, becomes especially problematic for a field of study that ostensibly wishes to recover such cultural pluralities and raises serious questions about the inadvertent politics of World Literature as a field of study and as a mode of circulation.

Even though Damrosch points out that translatability and circulation are not related to a work's quality, “achieving an effective life as world literature” is nevertheless a significant and aggressive driving force behind global literary markets. “World literariness” dictates who and what is published, who and what is translated and into which languages. Smaller literatures and languages find themselves within a cut-throat global literary market dominated by works written in English.³⁴ Emily Apter thus appropriately asks “to what extent ‘foreign’ writers of ambition are consciously or unconsciously writing for international markets; building translatability into their textuality” (Apter 2005: 101). 2006 Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk has been frequently accused of doing just this and “writing for the West.” Since Pamuk's popularity in the global literary markets is unmatched by any other Turkish author, Apter's question seems especially pertinent: is Pamuk the most globally conversant author of Turkish literature, in his plots and language? Is he, in fact, “narrating his nation into being,” as Margaret Atwood claimed Pamuk has done, somewhat more efficiently and eloquently than other Turkish authors? Given the marked discrepancy between Pamuk's renown and the relative obscurity of the *rest of* contemporary Turkish literature for an Anglophone readership, these questions foreground the tensions within definitions of translatability and circulation, definitions that have very significant implications for the “mode of circulation” that is World Literature. A consideration of Uyrkulak's *Tol* is significant from this perspective, because it reveals that there are Turkish works that are just as transnationally conversant as Pamuk's that do not circulate as easily—which should, at the very least, raise questions about world literariness being defined through transnational dialogues. Perhaps, the works that most effectively embody transnationalism and its tensions are also the least world-literary, because they prove particularly resistant to translation.

While it is tempting to think of Uyrkulak's linguistic and stylistic experimentation primarily as a means to challenge Turkish nationalist myths, it seems to me that he is also quite aware of the

³⁴ This has been an important point of discussion within Turkish literature as well, especially with regards to the international marketability of Pamuk. Pamuk's fame internationally feeds his popularity in Turkey. Many of Pamuk's works in Turkey contain a blurb on the cover detailing the number of languages the book has been translated into. I am not aware of any renowned US American authors being marketed in the United States by way of their conspicuous translatedness, for instance. This might seem like a trivial detail at first, but it is indicative of Turkish literature's internalization of the logic of global literary markets. A Turkish work counts—also within Turkey—to the extent that it has been able to reach an outside audience. Ironically, this marketability to the ‘outside world’ becomes the basis of the harshest critiques against Orhan Pamuk, who is frequently accused of ‘writing for the West.’

dynamics of world-literary circulation. In *Tol*, he uses the kind of transnational cacophonies I discussed above to also criticize and push back against the tokenizing tendencies of World Literature. The novel's resistance to translation should also be understood in this manner: as a rejection of the flattening tendencies of global circulation. The specificity of *Tol*'s humor and its political critiques suggest a simultaneous assertion of Turkishness and rejection of a monolithic, ethnically or linguistically homogenous Turkish identity. This seemingly contradictory move challenges the notion of an anchorless global perspective, forcing readers to think about the specificity of each context rather than creating a flattened illusion of similarity.

A work's success within World Literature might be related to its degree of translatability, but translatability itself is not always the antithesis of local embeddedness. Literary embodiments of World Literature's cherished qualities, such as transnationalism, multiculturalism, and polyvocality, pose serious challenges to translation, complicating the notion that the works that travel best are the works that most effectively speak to diverse contexts. It seems more appropriate then to go back to Emily Apter's correction in *Against World Literature* and begin to think instead about what untranslatability might do for World Literature and how we might best think about different forms of resistance to translation. Thinking about untranslatability offers an opportunity to think meaningfully about the politics and poetics of texts like *Tol*, which depict a local that is very much transnational. The untranslatable, in this sense, has the potential to challenge or undo national boundaries in literature, without creating the illusion that they are meaningless or irrelevant. It seems to me that such a perspective can more effectively accommodate David Damrosch's notion of texts as belonging simultaneously to the cultures from which they come and to others that read them, while challenging nationalist myths of purity and homogeneity.

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