

# World Classics in Turkish Theatrical Tradition and Back in World Canons: Ferhan Şensoy's Translational Recanonization Practices

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## Abstract

Ferhan Şensoy's translational recanonization practices and staged reworkings of the world classics involve use of a variety of components of Turkish theatrical tradition, particularly of *Ortaoyunu* and *Tuluat*. These reworkings are mainly characterized by political satire, explicit language, repetitions, and repartees as well as humor. Some of these reworkings functioned also as relay translations and were further translated and recanonized either through publication, or staging, or both, to be introduced back to various world canons. By scrutinizing Şensoy's reworking and recanonization practices, this study illustrates the extensive definition of the agency of the translator as a recanonizer and reworker as revealed in the case of Şensoy's fifteen reworkings of a variety of recanonized works of world literature some of which are *Fişne Pahçesu*, based on *The Cherry Orchard*, a play by Anton Chekhov; *Güle Güle Godot*, based on *Waiting for Godot*, a play by Samuel Beckett; *Üç Kurşunluk Opera*, based on *The Threepenny Opera*, a play by Bertolt Brecht; *Eşek Arıları*, based on *The Wasps*, a play by Aristophanes; *En Büyük Romülüs Başka Büyük Yok*, based on *Romulus the Great*, a play by Friedrich Dürrenmatt; *Anna'nın 7 Ana Günahı*, based on *The Seven Deadly Sins*, a libretto by Bertolt Brecht; *Şu Gogol Delisi*, based on *The Diary of a Madman*, a collection of short stories by Nikolai Gogol; *Uzun Donlu Kişot*, based on *Don Quixote*, a novel by Miguel de Cervantes. The study concludes that the translator/reworker Ferhan Şensoy's integration of components of Western and Turkish theatrical traditions through his reworkings is a unique example of theatre translation that is based on a holistic approach to theatre translation which considers translation as a component of the production along with such other elements as playwriting, acting, directing, and dramaturgical analysis. The study also argues that Şensoy's translational recanonization practices have contributed remarkably to the interaction and dialogue between Turkish and western cultural and performative traditions/canons.

**Keywords:** theatre translation, translational recanonization, reworking, Ferhan Şensoy, theatrical traditions, agency of the translator, translation of world classics

TÜRKİYE TİYATRO GELENEĞİ BAĞLAMINDA VE TEKRAR DÜNYA KANONLARINDA  
DÜNYA KLASİKLERİ: FERHAN ŞENSOY'UN ÇEVİRİ YOLUYLA YENİDEN  
KANONLAŞTIRMA PRATİKLERİ

## Öz

Ferhan Şensoy'un dünya klasiklerini çeviri yoluyla yeniden kanonlaştırma ve sahneleyerek yeniden işleyiş pratikleri, Türk tiyatro geleneğinin, özellikle Ortaoyunu ve Tuluat'ın çeşitli

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bileşenlerini içermektedir. Bu yeniden işleyişlerin en temel özellikleri, siyasi hiciv, açık saçık dil kullanımı, tekerlemeler ve tekrarlar ve mizahdır. Bu yeniden işleyişlerin bazıları aynı zamanda röle çeviri olarak işlev kazanmış, yayınlanma, sahnelenme ya da her ikisi yoluyla yeniden çevirileri dünya kanonlarında yeniden kanonlaştırılmışlardır. Bu çalışmada, Şensoy'un söz konusu yeniden işleyiş ve yeniden kanonlaştırma pratikleri incelenerek çevirmenin yeniden kanonlaştırıcı ve yeniden işleyici olarak genişletilmiş eyleyciliği ele alınacaktır. Şensoy'un yeniden işleyerek kanonlaştırdığı yapıtlardan bazıları şunlardır: Anton Çehov'un *Vişne Bahçesi* oyunundan hareketle *Fişne Pahçesu*, Samuel Beckett'in *Godot'yu Beklerken* oyunundan hareketle *Güle Güle Godot*, Bertolt Brecht'in *Üç Kuruşluk Opera* adlı oyunundan hareketle *Üç Kurşunluk Opera*, Aristophanes'in *Eşek Arıları* adlı oyunundan hareketle *Eşek Arıları*, Friedrich Dürrenmatt'ın *Büyük Romulus* adlı oyunundan hareketle *En Büyük Romülüs Başka Büyük Yok*, Bertolt Brecht'in *Yedi Büyük Günah* adlı librettosundan hareketle *Anna'nın 7 Ana Günahı*, Nikolai Gogol'un *Bir Delinin Hatıra Defteri* adlı kısa hikayesinden hareketle *Şu Gogol Delisi*, Miguel de Cervantes'in *Don Kişot* adlı romanından hareketle *Uzun Donlu Kişot*. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, çevirmen/yeniden işleyen Ferhan Şensoy'un Batı ve Türkiye teatral geleneklerine ait unsurları bir araya getirişinin, tiyatro çevirisine bütüncül yaklaşım sergileyen ve çeviriyi, prodüksiyonun oyun yazımı, oyunculuk, rejî ve dramaturji gibi unsurlarıyla birlikte ele alan bütüncül bir yaklaşımın benzersiz örneklerinden olduğunu göstermeye çalışmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu çalışma, Şensoy'un çeviri yoluyla yeniden kanonlaştırma edimlerinin Türkiye'nin kültürel/performatif gelenekleri ve kanonu ile batınlıklar arasındaki etkileşime ve diyaloga önemli katkılar sunduğu sonucuna varmaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** tiyatro çevirisi, çeviri yoluyla yeniden kanonlaştırma, yeniden işleyiş, Ferhan Şensoy, tiyatro gelenekleri, çevirmenin eyleyciliği, dünya klasiklerinin çevirisi

## INTRODUCTION

The agency of the translator as a mediator between and across cultures, canons, and eras has long been debated in the field of translation studies and is far from being simple. This complexity becomes even more telling when the translation of dramatic texts is in question and particularly when the expected and intended performativity, performability, and stageability of the target text are taken into consideration. Although the illusion of a dichotomy between “readability” and “performativity” of the translation of the dramatic text prevailed in the field of translation research (cf. Bassnett, 1985; Bassnett, 1991), there have been attempts to deconstruct this perception of polarization and see these features as non-dichotomous characteristics (Nikalorea, 1994, p. 252). Ekaterini Nikolarea's argument that such dichotomies lead to reductionist approaches to theatre translation research has made it necessary to seek new parameters and debates in theatre translation research.

The multiplicity of the ways the act of translation of dramatic texts has been addressed in translation studies is one of the main signs of the ambiguity and complexity associated with theatre translation. Translation -as the product, process, and concept- has been addressed in many different ways by different scholars -and practitioners alike- when theatre translation has been in question. The concepts of “drama translation” (Anderman, 2001, p. 71), “theatre translation”

(Brodie, 2020), along with many other alternatives such as “appropriation,” “adaptation,” “rewriting,” which are all very general terms and are not associated with a particular genre but are very frequently used while addressing theatre translation (cf. Brodie, 2020, p. 585) have each highlighted a different aspect of the translator’s agency. In a similar vein, besides the product and process of translation, the translator is also addressed in a variety of ways as will be extensively discussed below throughout the analysis of empirical data in this research. This multiplicity of names/concepts attests to the versatility of theatre translation, which, in itself, deserves further commentary/attention, particularly in terms of the multiplicity of tasks, interpretation processes, aesthetic and creative skills, cross-semiotic competences required throughout the translation of dramatic and/or theatrical texts. It is this versatility addressed both in theory and observed in empirical data that motivates a translation studies researcher to delve further into the nature of the agency of the theatre translator. In this research, the agency of Ferhan Şensoy as the translator of a variety of world classics as well as of contemporary dramatic texts into Turkish and/or other languages is discussed particularly from a translational recanonization perspective.

What makes Şensoy’s translations an intriguing kind of empirical data in agency research is the richness of unprecedented textual, linguistic, performative, (non-)conventional, and (re)canonizational interventions his translation process involves as well as the playful ways he names these translational interventions in a manner that problematizes and questions the agency of the theatre translator. Most of his translations have acted as relay translations that were further translated through interlingual or intralingual translation processes, which allowed them to keep circulating across canons and theatrical traditions.

Şensoy’s translations are, as this study will try to reveal, also crucial as points of negotiations and encounters between Turkish and Western theatrical traditions. Coming from an oral performative tradition and having been introduced to the Western dramatic tradition as early as Tanzimat Period (1839-1876), Turkish theatre has since been a ground of reception of the Western dramatic and theatrical works, and a platform of negotiation across these two dissimilar traditions. These attempts of negotiation have resulted in a “Turkish theatre in search of its own voice” (Ergil, 2022), and experimental, improvisational reworkings of Western dramatic texts have been published and/or staged. Ferhan Şensoy, the founder of Ortaoyuncular theatre company and one of the holders of the *kavuk* [turban], symbolizing the Turkish traditional performance of *Ortaoyunu*, has contributed to the search for the own voice of Turkish theatre by means of translating and performing some fundamental texts (of various genres) in world literature as well as some contemporary plays. Some of these translations are as follows: *Fişne Pahçesu*, based on *The Cherry Orchard*, a play by Anton Chekhov; *Güle Güle Godot*, based on *Waiting for Godot*, a play by Samuel Beckett; *Üç Kurşunluk Opera*, based on *The Threepenny Opera*, a play by Bertolt Brecht; *Eşek Arıları*, based on *The Wasps*, a play by Aristophanes; *En Büyük Romülüs Başka Büyük Yok*, based on *Romulus the Great*, a play by Friedrich Dürrenmatt; *Anna’nın 7 Ana Günahı*, based on *The Seven Deadly Sins*, a libretto by Bertolt Brecht; *Şu Gogol Delisi*, based on *The Diary of a Madman*, a collection of short stories by Nikolai Gogol; *Uzun Donlu Kişot*, based on *Don Quixote*, a novel by Miguel de Cervantes, to name but a few.

In this vein, this research seeks to highlight how Ferhan Şensoy's translation, reworking, and translational recanonization practices of world literature

(i) have contributed to the interaction and dialogue between Turkish and western cultural and performative traditions/canons,

(ii) have contributed to the search within the Turkish theatrical tradition in search of its own voice (Ergil, 2022),

(iii) may initiate new discussions in the discipline of Translation Studies in terms of the theoretical conceptualizations regarding the agency of the theatre translator,

(iv) may pave the way to further discussions in Translation Studies with respect to the conceptualization of "rewritings," "reworkings," and "adaptations" as well as their cross-canonical influences,

(v) may illustrate how the concept of «translational recanonization» may be utilized in relation to the agency of the translator.

In doing so, the research aims at illustrating through Şensoy's case the potentially extensive and panoramic agency of the theatre translator.

## **1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THEATRE TRANSLATION AS REWORKING AND TRANSLATIONAL RECANONIZATION**

Last century has seen many attempts of non-western dramatists and theatre practitioners to respond to the dramatic and theatrical conventions of Western culture and civilization. Dialectically, and not surprisingly, in line with the 20<sup>th</sup>-century socio-political backdrop which brought about traumatic and dystopian perspectives to art and reality, new aesthetic forms (that will respond to the centuries-old, given conventions and traditions) have been sought. Not only has the western drama itself given rise to self-critical and self-reflexive perspectives and practices, but also non-western dramatic and theatrical responses to the western dramatic canon have very naturally and smoothly emerged and developed. Responding to the western dramatic canon required questioning (and challenging) two parameters of theatrical or dramatic works: the time period and tradition to which they belonged. Questions of whether or not Shakespeare is our contemporary (cf. Kott, 1964) and discussions on re-interpreting Ancient works of western drama have dominated literature, theatre, and dramaturgy scholarship. Besides these theoretical elaborations of western dramatic tradition, practices of playwriting and staging -especially of the canonized western classics- sought negotiation and dialogue between the western and non-western conventions, as will be further discussed below in this research.

For playwrights and performers of non-western civilizations coming from oral and performative theatrical traditions, a common way of claiming negotiation and dialogue between their tradition -which lacked a written dramatic component until very recently- and a centuries-old, written dramatic tradition of the west has been to retranslate, rewrite and/or stage -thus recanonize- canonical texts of western tradition. A striking example would be the case of "Arab

Hamlets", many rewritings of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* within an Arab context<sup>1</sup>. More recently, the anthologization of the English translations of these Arab rewritings of *Hamlet* and *Oedipus* has been a further step in seeking and claiming a more symmetrical interaction between canonized Western dramatic works and Arab theatrical tradition.<sup>2</sup> As Al Mukhtar Salem's and Alyaa Al-Lami's theses both argue, the anthologized English translations of the works of Arab *Oedipus* and *Hamlet* traditions, are both attempts to claim a more symmetric interaction between European and Arab traditions and contribute to cross-cultural communication through theatre translation (Salem, 2020; Al-Lami, 2021). Besides, they open up new avenues for scholars to scrutinize the interaction between cultures, traditions, and civilizations, particularly through theatre translation.

These striking attempts between Arab and Anglophone worlds to claim a more symmetric intercultural and cross-cultural dialogue through (re)translations and rewritings of canonized dramatic texts of western culture are not without their Turkish counterparts. Coming from an oral performative tradition, and having received dramatic literature through translations of western dramatic texts ever since the Tanzimat Period (1839-1876), Turkish theatre has always been seeking its own voice (cf. Ergil, 2022) in the face of strong instances and/or possibilities of merely imitating Western dramatic art, which rests upon a very mature written dramatic tradition. Throughout the odyssey of Turkish theatrical and dramatic art seeking its own voice, canonized western dramatic texts have been (re-)introduced to the Turkish cultural canon through a variety of kinds and manners of translation that I have referred above in the introduction of this research: namely, "rewritings," "appropriations," "adaptations," etc. Given the dissimilarity between the traditions of the source and target texts, and along with the creativity required throughout the translation of dramatic/theatrical texts, the process of translation required diversity in terms of the interventions of the translator. The paratexts of these translations reveal how the agency of the translator was addressed in many different ways avoiding the word "translator". In Can Yücel's translations of Shakespeare the translator was addressed as "Türkçe Söyleyen", literally meaning "saying in Turkish"; in Tiyatrotem's translations of Alfred Jarry, Shakespeare, and August Strindberg, one version of two different translations is addressed as "translation" whereas in addressing the second translation the translators have inconsistency in referring to themselves and their task, generally using "moving on from Jarry's [Shakespeare's/Strindberg's] play" [*Matmazel Julie oyunundan hareketle*] and deliberately avoiding to name the kind of their agency (Ergil, 2020, p. 45-49). Similarly, in Şensoy's case, the translator's self-reference involves an emphasis on the *act* rather than the agent as revealed in the examples "bozan" (deconstructor/destroyer) as a parody

<sup>1</sup> In her book, *Hamlet's Arab Journey*, Margaret Litvin provides a historical account of the many Arab *Hamlets* in Arab appropriation (Litvin, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> The anthologies *Four Arab Hamlet Plays* (Carlson et al., 2015) and *The Arab Oedipus: Four Plays* (Carlson, 2005) are anthologized translations of Arab *Hamlets* and *Oedipuses* into English and have obviously created an opportunity to claim more symmetrical dialogues between the canonized Western drama and the non-dramatic Arab tradition. In his doctoral dissertation about the influence of the translated Arab *Hamlet* anthology, Al Mukhtar Amhmed Alfeetouri Salem (2020) argues that "The demand of the Anglo-American intelligentsia to turn to Arab and Muslim responses and cultures has opened new avenues for intercultural communication, negotiation, and dialogue". Similarly, in her Master thesis on the English translations of Arab *Oedipuses*, Alyaa Dawood Khudhur Al-Lami concludes that the publication of these anthologized translations of Arab adaptations of *Oedipus Rex* marks an attempt to attain cross-cultural negotiation in the face of stereotypical perceptions of Arab culture (2021, p. 135).

for “yazan” (writer), “Türkçeleyen” a wordplay and neologism meaning “Turkishizer”. The fact that these translators avoid manifesting themselves as “translators” in *some* of their translations where they creatively interact with and intervene throughout the translation process resembles - and not coincidentally does so- the multiplicity of the ways in which translation studies scholars address theatre translation. Interestingly, as much as they avoid self-reference as “the translator”, they prefer to name their task after the *act* and *action* of their performance and agency such as “saying in Turkish,” “deconstructing,” “Turkishizing,” “moving on”. This emphasis on the performative act of the agency of the translator urges the researcher to observe the task(s) involved in this agency with a special focus on the performativity emphasized through this self-referential discourse. In this research, such translations where the translators deliberately avoid referring to their acts as “translations” will be referred as “reworkings”, a concept highlighting the performative and corporeal aspect of the theatre translator. This concept is proposed by theatre and translation studies scholar Burç İdem Dinçel (2019), and seems to compensate for the lack of an alternative word referring to the creative, (performative) and interventive translation task of the theatre translator. As revealed below, it seems that the concept may function effectively both in translation studies research, in the publication of dramatic texts, and in theatrical practices.

Both in translation studies and theatre studies, the notion of “rewriting” is ambiguous and far from being clear. The concept is almost always used interchangeably with such other concepts as “appropriation,” “familiarization,” and “adaptation” alongside many other alternatives. Similarly, as mentioned above, outside the scholarly discourse, i.e. in theatre practice, the way dramatists or directors address their agency is far from consistent. Clearly, many playwrights and/or directors either avoid using the word “translation,” or “adaptation” probably because they believe their task falls out of the given categorizations and descriptions attributed to “translation” and “adaptation”.

The concept of “rewriting” in translation studies has proved to be useful for translation scholarship in many ways, especially because it highlights the authorial agency of the translator. However, for a very specific field of translation such as theatre translation, which has a whole set of peculiarities, the concept seems to fall short of functioning. For one thing, theatre translation calls for more than *authorial* agency because it is inherently performative and in most cases it is intended for performative purposes reaching beyond mere authorship. This performative kind of rewriting requires more than textuality throughout the process of translation and therefore needs to be addressed differently. Burç İdem Dinçel’s concept of *reworking*, however, addresses theatre translation as a performative task beyond textual and linguistic recreation. Dinçel contends that:

[...] considering translation as a mode of actual production that comes into being through the corporeality of the performative space of theatre compels one to re-think “rewriting” for the sake of another term that could be proposed as “reworking” so as to downplay the textual implications of the former. (2019, p.xxi)

Conducting research on Turkish reworkings of dramatic texts of the Western canon, especially in case of Ferhan Şensoy’s reworkings which have undergone constant retranslation and recanonization processes, requires methodologies that examine more than the textual creation, a methodology prioritizing the dynamic positioning of these constantly translated texts between and

across canons. Therefore, in this study, these reworkings are scrutinized from a translational recononization perspective, which allows the researcher to analyze the texts in terms of inter-/cross-canonical movements besides the textual transformations entailed throughout the translation process. The reworkings of canonical dramatic texts of world theatre by Ferhan Şensoy form the corpus of the research, as they present many different types of translational recononization. Many of the dramatic texts under scrutiny here have been reworked and recononized many times back and forth in various cultures and languages, which makes these recononization processes, above all, means of intercultural and crosscultural dialogue.

Translational recononization, in brief, is “the act of reintroducing a text or a cultural artifact into another national or transnational cultural canon” (Ergil, 2021, p. 214). Besides the fact that the constant recononization of the corpus requires a methodology based on recononization, the concept of translational recononization forms the methodological framework of this research for the following reasons:

(i) As the following elaboration on the types of translational recononization will reveal, Şensoy’s reworkings are examples of a variety of types of recononization such as standard retranslational recononization, interlingual translational recononization, relay translational recononization, back recononization, and intralingual recononization, all to be analyzed from a dynamic canonical perspective,

(ii) Since “[a] translational recononization perspective brings about a necessity to observe socio-political and economic infrastructures of the canons as they receive translated texts, images, and artifacts” (Ergil, 2021, p. 251), this methodology requires an analysis of the canons, contextualizing the textual and linguistic aspects of translational practices within the Turkish canonical and world canonical settings as well as their underlying infrastructures,

(iii) Theatre translation in a Turkish cultural context has some inter-canonical peculiarities that require addressing theatre translation from a translational recononizational perspective. The tension that emerged as the Turkish theatrical tradition sought its own voice in the face of the Western dramatic tradition (cf. Ergil, 2022) is inherently inter-canonical and cross-canonical in nature and is probably best understood by means of a (re)canonizational methodology,

(iv) Şensoy’s reworkings have been reworked many times by himself and others across canons in more than three decades and therefore require diachronistic methodologies to work with, which will allow the researcher to understand the inter-/cross-canonical dynamics of these reworkings not only in space but also in time<sup>3</sup>.

Translational recononization may come in many types as roughly categorized by the following typology (Ergil, 2021, pp. 217-220): (i) retranslational recononization (standard retranslational recononization/cross-genre retranslational recononization/cross-semiotic

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<sup>3</sup> Methodologically, translational recononization allows research in diachronistical manner and provides an opportunity to the translation studies researcher to work through a historically contextualizing methodology: “Research on translational recononization welcomes a diachronistic manner of research and a historical perspective since (re)translational decisions, including the selection of the source texts and translation strategies, have intended and achieved functions in cultural canons and are governed by the world-historical and socio-cultural dynamics underlying them” (Ergil, 2021, p. 250).

retranslational recanonization), (ii) interlingual translational recanonization, (iii) relay translational recanonization, (iv) back recanonization, (v) pseudo-translated recanonization, (vi) aborted recanonization, (vii) censored recanonization, (viii) resistant recanonization, (ix) intralingual recanonization.

Şensoy's reworkings illustrate most of the types of translational recanonization above: namely, all three types of retranslational recanonization, interlingual translational recanonization, relay translational recanonization, back recanonization, and intralingual recanonization. The abundance of examples of translational recanonization in Şensoy's reworkings are therefore very crucial and relevant examples of various kinds of the agency of the theatre translator.

## 2. AGENCY OF THE TRANSLATOR: FERHAN ŞENSOY'S REWORKING OF WORLD LITERATURE INTO TURKISH AND BEYOND

The multiplicity and diversity of recanonizational, linguistic, and cultural interventions made by Şensoy in his translations are embodied in fifteen target texts (as shown below in Table 1) that are reworkings of the ancient, classic, and contemporary texts of the world canon, translated from *many* source texts in eight source or relay languages (English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Turkish, Greek, Latin). As the table reveals, some of his reworkings are translation collages where he either integrates more than one source text of the same author or of different authors, or he integrates other authors' texts with his own texts to the point that the boundaries between these texts are blurred or dissolved. This is the reason why the number of source and target texts do not match and the number of source texts is higher. The source texts belong to six different genres: play, libretto, biography, historiography, short story, novel. Since Şensoy spoke Turkish, English, and French, some of his reworkings -in which the source text is English, Turkish, or French- are probably direct translations from those languages, whereas other reworkings (such as those from Russian or Greek) are indirect relay translations. The table clearly illustrates a striking variety of source texts, source/relay/target languages, genres, eras, collaging techniques, and recanonization practices which is unique in the Turkish theatrical setting and provides unique material for empirical research on the agency of the theatre translator.

Title of the TT	Year of staging	Title of the ST	ST author	Genre and language of the ST	Further recanonization
<i>En Büyük Romülüs</i> <i>Başka Büyük Yok</i>	1982	<i>Romulus the Great</i> { <i>Romulus der Große</i> }	Friedrich Dürrenmatt	Play, German.	
<i>Eski Moda Komedyası</i>	1983	<i>An Old-Fashioned Comedy</i> [ <i>Старомодная</i>	Aleksei Arbuzov	Play, Russian.	

		комедия]			
Anna'nın 7 Ana Günahı	1983-1984	<i>The Seven Deadly Sins</i> [Die sieben Todsünden]	Bertolt Brecht	Libretto, German.	
Eşek Arıları	1986-1987	<i>The Wasps</i> [Σφῆκες]	Aristophanes	Play, Greek.	
İçinden Tramvay Geçen Şarkı	1986-1987	Multiple source texts: Translation collages.	Karl Valentin	Play(s), German.	
Don Juan ile Madonna	1988-1989	<i>Dona Juana</i>	Anca Visdei	Play, French.	
Yorgun Matador	1990-1991	Multiple source texts: Translation collages.	Pierre-Henri Cami	Play(s), French.	
Güle Güle Godot	1992-1993	<i>Waiting for Godot,</i> <i>En Attendant</i> <i>Godot</i>	Samuel Beckett	Play, English and French.	
Köhne Bizans Operası	1993	Multiple source texts: Translation collages.	Charles Diehl, George Alexandrovich Ostrogorsky, Procopius, Victorien Sardou	Biography, historiography, play. French, Russian, Latin.	
Şu Gogol Delisi	1994-1995	<i>The Diary of A Madman</i> [Записки сумасшедшего]	Nikolai Gogol	Short Story, Russian.	<i>Ce Fou de Gogol</i> (Fr.)
3 Kurşunluk Opera	1995-1996	<i>The Threepenny Opera</i> [Die Dreigroschenoper]	Bertolt Brecht	Play, German.	Brecht's version (1928) was a rewriting of John Gay's <i>The Beggars' Opera</i>

					(1728)
<i>Aptallara Güzel Gelen Televizyon Dizileri</i>	1996	<i>The Patient [La Patiente]</i>	Anca Visdei	Play, French.	
<i>Fişne Pahçesu</i>	2000-2002	<i>The Cherry Orchard</i>	Anton Chekhov	Play, Russian.	
<i>Uzun Donlu Kişot</i>	2004-2005	<i>Don Quixote</i>	Cervantes	Novel, Spanish.	
<i>Ruhundan Tramvay Geçen Adam</i>	2010	Multiple source texts: Translation collages.	Karl Valentin	Play(s), German.	

Table 1. Ferhan Şensoy's reworking and recanonization practices of world literature.

### 2.1. Deconstructing given categories on translator's agency: Şensoy's self-referential discourse

The dethronement of the (dramatic) text in contemporary times is not peculiar to plays and their stagings. Despite the fact that plays are very much prone to deconstruction because they form only the initial step in a complex cognitive and interpretive process in the minds of many future receivers such as readers, directors, critics, actors, audiences, and whoever else is exposed to them, other forms of texts, even of high literature, have lost their absolute meaning and power as the *œuvres*, the masterpieces of their authors. This holds true for the authors who have been announced to be "dead" by Roland Barthes as early as 1967 (cf. Barthes, 1988). Barthes' discourse involved "texts" instead of "works" or *œuvres*, and "the writer" instead of an "author". He found the removal of the author quite transformative in terms of contemporary writing which has resonated in the field of translation studies to the point that the role of the translator was questioned in the absence of an author. Although the authorial presence of the translator can now be claimed and the role of the translator can be questioned even in the presence of an author, back in 1967, the absence of the author was a crucial opportunity for the translator to take a more primary position. Among many responses of the translation studies scholars to Barthes' manifestation, one remarkable response belonged to Kaisa Koskinen who challenged the notion of fidelity because the plurality of possible meanings would not allow a single "faithful" reproduction of an original (1994, p. 451). The translator, in the absence of the author, was now one step closer to and felt more entitled to the claim for the plurality of meanings and the interpretive nature of the task they were undertaking.

In the fields of dramaturgy and theatre studies, a striking paradigm shift may be considered to be the avant-garde and post-dramatic approaches that undermined the authority of "the dramatic text". According to Eylem Ejder, before contemporary times that Hans-Thies Lehmann

calls the “post-dramatic times,” the dramatic text conventionally had absolute power over other components of the theatrical performance. However, the challenge brought about by the non-conventional approaches of avant-garde and post-dramatic theatre marked the loss of the priority given to the dramatic text (Ejder, 2017, p. 28).

Şensoy’s self-referential discourse, when viewed from the above-mentioned approaches to the relation between the text-the playwright-the translator, becomes more relevant. The fact that he comes from a non-dramatic and performative tradition (*Ortaoyunu* and *Tuluat*) is another factor motivating his tendency to (re)work towards the performativity of the play. His discourse on the nature of his translation/reworking processes challenges existing norms and definitions regarding the given definitions of the concept of “translation” as well as the meaning attributed to “the dramatic text,” and the perception of “the translator” as such. The multiplicity of the ways in which he names his task is in line with the way he de-/re-constructs the texts: uncanny, playful, experimental, improvisational, and metatheatrical.

As Table 2 below tries to clearly reveal, Şensoy’s self-reference as the translator/reworker/director of the play involves a variety of wordings and wordplays. In *İçinden Tramvay Geçen Şarkı* (1986), a collage of translations of Karl Valentine’s plays, he claims co-authorship and is addressed as one of the playwrights whereas in *Eşek Arıları* (1986) he has three different references to himself: “Director” [Yönetmen], “deconstructed/destroyed by” [Bozan], “deconstructed/destroyed-directed by” [Bozan-yöneten]. Here, there is a reference to the Turkish collocation “yazmak-bozmak” which is a saying based on sound repetition meaning to write and undo what is written. This wordplay explicitly reveals the playful and deconstructive nature of the translator/reworker, and when the agency of the reworker in collages is taken into consideration it is natural to refer to these two kinds of agency differently because in collages the reworker intervenes in the general structure and framework of the whole play. In *Aptallara Güzel Gelen Televizyon Dizileri*, Şensoy is referred as the writer (“Written and directed by: Ferhan Şensoy”) whereas in the program booklet he is the “writer” and “Turkishizer” (Türkçeleyen), which is a neologism meaning “putting into Turkish”. However, in the intro of the Youtube video of the play, the intro mentions Anca Visdei -the ST playwright- as the “writer” and Şensoy as the “Turkishizer” whereas in the outro Şensoy is addressed as the “writer” and “director” of the play. This inconsistency and diversity of the playful self-references of the translator point out the creativity of the theatre translator, and the variety of tasks or responsibilities involved in this kind of translation. The difference in the discourses of these reworkings is also result of the different tasks involved in each translation or reworking process. *İçinden Tramvay Geçen Şarkı* involves more authorial effort as it is a collage of the translations of Karl Valentin’s works and the intervention of the reworker is more direct, authorial, and extensive when compared to his local interventions in *Aptallara Güzel Gelen Televizyon Dizileri* where he adds two additional characters that intervene in the flow of the translation of the playwright’s text (Ortaoyuncular, 2022b), and even discuss the translation comparing it with the French source text.

	DVD cover	Program booklet	Youtube Video	Youtube teaser
<i>İçinden Tramvay Geçen Şarkı</i> 1986-1987	<u>Yazan:</u> Karl Valentin-Ferhan Şensoy <u>[Written by:</u> Karl-Valentin-Ferhan Şensoy]	Karl Valentin-Ferhan Şensoy	<u>Yazan:</u> Karl Valentin-Ferhan Şensoy <u>[Written by:</u> Karl-Valentin-Ferhan Şensoy]	Agency of the translator or author not mentioned.
<i>Eşek Arıları</i> 1986-1987	<u>Yazan:</u> Aristophanes <u>Yönetmen:</u> Ferhan Şensoy <u>[Written by:</u> Aristophanes <u>Director:</u> Ferhan Şensoy]	N/A	<u>Yazan:</u> Aristophanes <u>Bozan:</u> Ferhan Şensoy <u>[Written by:</u> Aristophanes <u>Destroyed/deconstructed by:</u> Ferhan Şensoy]	<u>Yazan:</u> Aristophanes <u>Bozan-Yöneten:</u> Ferhan Şensoy <u>[Written by:</u> Aristophanes <u>Destroyed/deconstructed by:</u> Ferhan Şensoy]
<i>Aptallara Güzel Gelen Televizyon Dizileri</i> 1996	<u>Yazan-Yöneten:</u> Ferhan Şensoy <u>[Written and directed by:</u> Ferhan Şensoy]	Cover: Anca Videi Ferhan Şensoy Inside the booklet: <u>Yazan:</u> Anca Videi <u>Türkçeleyen:</u> Ferhan Şensoy <u>[Written by:</u> Anca Videi <u>Turkishized by:</u> Ferhan Şensoy]	Intro: <u>Yazan:</u> Anca Videi <u>Türkçeleyen:</u> Ferhan Şensoy Outro: <u>Yazan ve yöneten:</u> Ferhan Şensoy Intro: <u>[Written by:</u> Anca Videi <u>Turkishized by:</u> Ferhan Şensoy] Outro: <u>[Written and directed by:</u> Ferhan Şensoy]	<u>Yazan:</u> Anca Visdei <u>Türkçeleyen:</u> Ferhan Şensoy  <u>[Written by:</u> Anca Visdei <u>Turkishized by:</u> Ferhan Şensoy]

Table 2. Examples of Şensoy's self-referential discourse on the agency of the translator/reworker.

Another self-reference Şensoy makes regarding his agency as the translator is “updating”. In the program booklet of *Üç Kurşunluk Opera*, he gave an account of how he “updates” Brecht's play which was already the updating of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. So he implies that his version of the play is an update of an already updated version. It is very possible that the way he names his agency in each play reflects his intended aims for each unique translation/reworking act.

## 2.2. Reworking the text

Ferhan Şensoy's reworking practices involve the use of unique and unprecedented dramatic techniques motivated by both Turkish and Western theatrical traditions. His agency exceeds mere textual and linguistic interventions and is performative in nature.

### 2.2.1 Humour through manipulation, modification, and de-/re-construction of language

Linguistic creativity and intervention characterize Şensoy's translation/reworking strategy and are the main components underlying his humor. According to Yavuz Pekman, the way Şensoy plays with language to the point of recreating it is the basic factor underlying both his humor and his alternative approach to creating an alienation effect (2001, p. 151), which is peculiar to his indigenous and reworked plays.

Ebru Aracı classifies Şensoy's linguistic peculiarities in three different ways: "(i) deviations from the dialect, (ii) deliberate deviation from the language in order to show superiority (i.e. when Hacivat adds Arabic and Persian words in his speech), (iii) inability to use language due to some physical disorders" (2012, p. 18).

Şensoy's reworkings usually involve either integrating various languages or creating a new language for the play. Table 3 below shows some examples of the use of non-standard or made-up languages as a part of the translation/reworking process.

Title of the Play	Language
<i>Köhne Bizans Operası</i> 1993	"Not very decent Greco-Roman!" (Ortaoyuncular, 2022a)
<i>Fişne Pağçesu</i> 2000-2002	Laz language
<i>Aşkımızın Gemisi Fındık Kabuğu</i> 1991 Intralingual recanonization.	Ünye dialect

Table 3. Uses of various languages and dialects in Ferhan Şensoy's reworkings.

The description of the Youtube video of *Köhne Bizans Operası* involves the story of his creation of a new language for the play. In a poem narrating the writing process of the play, Şensoy comes up with the question "How should the language of the play be?" and arrives at the conclusion: "I gave it a thought for a while, I tried to find a language in my own way: A not very decent Greco-Roman!" (Ortaoyuncular, 2022a, translation mine). This original use of a fabricated Greco-Roman with its slang discourse functions as a mirror of Theodora's life in a Byzantine setting full of intrigues, greed, and conspiracies which have references to Turkish politics as well as world politics. The use of this new language which is an intermingling of Turkish, Latin, and Greek is inspired by the imitations of Greek characters in traditional Turkish theatre (Pekman, 2022, p. 152). This language, among many other intermingled language uses of Şensoy, brings back the multicultural, cosmopolitan legacy of Ottoman theatre and its inclusion of non-Muslim ethnic groups. Reviving and embracing the diverse multicultural, multilingual tradition this way is a unique example of a linguistically and culturally pluralistic form of theatre translation.

Another aspect of Şensoy's linguistic creativity instrumentalized as a means of humor is the neologisms he uses. The word "memedanlık" [boob holder] in *Güle Güle Godot* (Ortaoyuncular 2021b) to refer to a bra is only one of the examples that are abundant in all of his plays and are peculiar to his plays only.

### 2.2.2 "Collage"ing and Reworking as historiography and criticism

Şensoy's translation collages, or collaged translations, which can be used interchangeably within this context, are historiographical and critical acts of translation. Two examples of these collages are *İçinden Tramvay Geçen Şarkı* (Ortaoyuncular, 2020c) and *Yorgun Matador* (Ortaoyuncular, 2022c), the former consisting of collages of Karl Valentin's plays integrated with Şensoy's sketches added to narrate Valentin's life story, and the latter being a play with a similar structure based on the life and works of Pierre-Henri Cami. These historiographical and biographical collages, while depicting the lives and works of Karl Valentin and Pierre-Henri Cami, critically depict the political, social, and theatrical contexts of the time they lived in.

Şensoy's critical interventions usually come as songs with lyrics critical of the society, literary circles, and theatre circles of the two playwrights' times. The first act of *Yorgun Matador* ends with Cami (acted by Şensoy) singing this song:

Nobody takes my writings seriously, / My name is not an entry in Larousse, / I am a man that noone knows, / They pretend that I do not exist, / That fagot André Breton does not include me in the anthology of Black humour / [...] My works when put one on another will be taller than André Breton [...]" (Ortaoyuncular, 2022c, translation mine).

The second act starts with a song by a female actor (Demet Akbağ) with the following lyrics:

France is a strange place with a book store in every corner / bookshelves full of dictionaries / and lots of encyclopedias/ You can find whatever you are looking for but Cami / [...] / France is a strange place / full of literary figures, / According to literary histories, a man named Cami did not exist. / If you ask us, he lived, he is still living / and he is even with us right now (Ortaoyuncular, 2022c, translation mine).

According to Mona Baker, translators are not simple mediators but are re-narrators, who through re-narration do not *imitate* the reality but also actively participate in its *construction*:

[...] the stories we narrate do not only mediate our access to reality, but also participate in configuring that reality. Translation is thus understood as a form of (re-)narration that *constructs* rather than *represents* the events and characters it re-narrates in another language. Translators and interpreters do not mediate cultural encounters that exist outside the act of translation but rather participate in configuring these encounters: they are embedded in the narratives that circulate in the context in which they produce a translation and simultaneously contribute to the elaboration, mutation, transformation, and dissemination of these narratives through their translation choices [...] The narrative approach thus grants translators and interpreters considerable agency and acknowledges the decisive and highly complex role they play in their own societies [...] as well as globally [...] (Baker, 2014, p. 159; italics not mine)

Şensoy's collaged translations are an example of the translator/reworker constructing what Mona Baker would call "competing narratives" in the face of existing ones (cf. Baker, 2006). In

these two examples, the narratives Şensoy constructs of Karl Valentin, Pierre-Henri Cami, along with the literary histories they have been contextualized in are alternative narratives functioning as attempts to “perform” or claim new historiographies, cultural histories, and literary histories, as well as more just images of the lives and works of these playwrights. His reworkings in these collages clearly attempt to question the literary images of these personalities as well as their lives and they may be regarded as examples of theatre translators as literary critic and image-makers.

### 2.2.3 Integrating Turkish theatrical components into World Classics

Ses-1885, the theatre building where Ortaoyuncular performed their plays, is an urban space symbolizing the cosmopolitan, multicultural, linguistically pluralistic urban life and artistic approach prevailing since the Tanzimat Period. The theatre building, initially built in the backyard of Cite d’Alep, and was previously used as a circus area (cirque de Pera), an opera building, and a theatre building (previously called “Varyete Tiyatrosu”) is named by many theatre and culture historians as the most important building in our theatre history (cf. Pekman, 2011, p. 81). The iconic building is crucial in terms of the urban memory and collective memory of Istanbul as well as being a landmark in Ottoman and Republican art history.

Within this urban context, which has hosted both Western and Turkish theatrical traditions for more than a decade, Şensoy instrumentalized *Ortaoyunu* and *Tuluat* motifs throughout the reworking processes of the fundamental texts of Western literature and world literature.

Following the improvisational, interactive tradition of the performative tradition of Turkish theatre, Şensoy’s use of meta theatricality is how he positions himself in the face of illusionistic tradition and conventional Western theatre. This feature characterizes both his indigenous plays and translations and in both cases, it is a negotiation between Western and Turkish traditions.

Some other main strategies he uses -discussed in various parts of this research- as he integrates Turkish and Western traditions are as follows:

(i) Use of neologisms, (ii) use of languages and dialects (of the previous Ottoman non-Muslim groups such as Greeks), (iii) repetitions and repartees, (iv) meta theatricality, (v) replacing Brechtian alienation techniques with Turkish traditional motifs such as deviating from the standard language and deviating from the dialect, (vi) improvisation and interaction with the audience.

### 2.3. Recanonizing the text

Şensoy’s recanonization of world classics did not necessarily involve translations into Turkish. What makes his recanonization practices unique is the translation and further recanonization of these Turkish translations and reworkings into other languages and back to world canons (cf. Ergil, 2022). Başak Ergil narrates the recanonization history of Şensoy’s reworking *Ce fou de Gogol* as follows:

An example of reworking and translational recanonisation by Şensoy is his play *Ce fou de Gogol*, reworked and staged in French in Canada in 1974. The staging of *Ce fou de Gogol* in Montreal at Theatre Patriote was followed by the performance of the play as a radio play in Canada in the same year. In 1975, Şensoy won “the best foreign playwright award,”

and Monique Mercure won “the best actress award” in Canada. In 1993, his Turkish reworking *Şu Gogol Delisi* [This madman Gogol] was staged and brought the play three awards within the Turkish theatrical context: Derya Baykal was awarded “the best actress award,” Canan Göknil was given “the best costume award” and the play was given “Avni Dilligil the most original play award” (2022, p. 102).

Apparently, the recanonization of Nikolai Gogol’s *The Diary of a Madman* (1835), in French translation in Canada (1975) and in Turkish (1993) is an example of Şensoy’s self-translation, relay translation, and back translation practices which correspond to different kinds of translational recanonization.

Another recanonization practice is that of *Waiting for Godot/En Attendant Godot*, a play first reworked in 1968 and was further reworked in seven different versions in the span of 33 years up until 2001. The play was translated and recanonized in Turkish, English, French, and Russian (cf. Ergil, 2022)

His recanonizations of world literature are a response to world literary and theatrical canons -as well as their histories and historiographies-, and an attempt to integrate Western and Turkish theatrical traditions. In line with the Arab *Hamlet* and *Oedipus* reworkings discussed in the first part of this study, the non-Western recanonizations of the reworkings of these works of Western literature form a response both to the conventions of European dramatic literature and to the asymmetric relations between Western and non-Western canons, where non-Western literary and cultural canons have been on the receiving part. With these attempts, which can be regarded as steps towards true interaction between these canons, theatre translation becomes a kind of mediation which escapes -if not avoids- the given hierarchical and asymmetrical relation between these canons.

#### 2.4. Agency of the theatre translator/reworker

As the above analyses have illustrated, Şensoy’s translational recanonization and reworking practices show the diversity of tasks of a theatre translator and allow for an extensive definition of translator’s agency. As the above elaborations reveal, below are some acts performed by Şensoy as the translator/reworker of many works of world literature: (i) interlingual translator, (ii) intralingual translator, (iii) intercultural mediator, (iv) self-translator, (v) retranslator, (vi) social critic, (vii) literary critic, (viii) theatre critic, (ix) historiographer, (x) experimentator, (xi) alternative narrator, (xii) recanonizer, (xiii) publisher, (xiv) satirist, (xv) biographer, (xvi) linguist, (xvii) performer.

Şensoy, therefore, is a unique example of a theatre translator whose practices as well as self-referential and self-reflexive discourse show the multiplicity of possible tasks of a theatre translator.

#### CONCLUSION

The body of analyses above, regarding Şensoy’s translational practices with respect to both translational recanonization and translator’s agency, lead this research to two sets of conclusions from these two various perspectives.

In terms of Şensoy's translational reanonization practices, it can be concluded that these practices are a contribution to the interaction between Turkish and Western cultural and performative traditions as well as canons. In terms of the agency of the theatre translator, it has been discussed above in part 2.4 that Şensoy is a theatre translator with all multiple types of agency.

According to Yavuz Pekman, a theatre historian and a member of Şensoy's Ortaoyuncular theatre company, Şensoy owes his success as a playwright to his holistic view of theatre:

Ferhan Şensoy signifies both a stage in Turkish theater's search for its own identity, and an important point that dramatic writing has recently reached, with his unique aesthetic structure, stage language, and audience/stage relationship. Moreover, Şensoy understood that the identity of Turkish theater could not be found only through a one-sided study in the field of authorship, and by establishing a theatre company, he tried to create an understanding of acting and staging that would go hand in hand with the texts he wrote, which means he endeavoured to establish a holistic theatre formation (just like Brecht and Fo did) (2002, p. 149, translation mine).

Theatre translation, as all theory and practice have shown, is an act beyond textual and linguistic concerns and is performative by its very nature. What makes Şensoy's agency so encompassing and extensive as a theatre translator is his holistic and contextualizing perspective which positions him between cultures, languages, canons, and not only literary but also performative traditions. From the point of translation studies, besides looking at an object of translation from a holistic perspective, it is important that each translation task is to be treated as a separate, unique translation project, which, in the variety of self-reflexive and self-referential discourse of Şensoy, the uniqueness of each translation process and the tasks of the theatre translator for that particular project are reflected. Şensoy sets a rare example as a theatre translator both because of his holistic approach to theatre and his unprecedented approach to each task of theatre translation and does not necessarily limit his translational decisions to the same strategies each time he undertakes a translation task. In this vein, the seeming inconsistency prevailing in the self-referential discourse created by Şensoy (which is also found in the discourses of other theatre translators such as Can Yücel and Tiyatrotem) in terms of his agency is in fact a sign of the unlimited possibilities of each new and unique translation process and can be regarded as a manifestation of the translatability of the dramatic/theatrical text.

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