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Intertextual allusions and evaluation of their translation in the novel *Silent House* by Orhan Pamuk

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze the intertextual allusions in the novel *Sessiz Ev* by Orhan Pamuk (1983) and evaluate the translations of these allusions in the translated product by Finn (2012). To this end, Riffaterre's (1978) intertextuality theory has been adopted. The findings were based on Aktulum's (2011) definition of allusions. Cultural, scientific and historical allusions have been defined in the novel. In translation analysis, it was found that certain allusions were over-interpreted in the translated product. In the translation analysis, Kasar's (2009) classification of translation evaluation was adopted.

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1. Introduction

The term intertextuality was never used or coined by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) in *The Dialogic Imagination*, however it was this book that paved the way to intertextuality, adopted by many consecutive literary researchers. As Bakhtin coined the term “dialogic” in this book, it was put forward that discourse can be produced in a cultural condition, which can be gained through the experience in a language, the set of rules of which both parties of an interaction have internalized by belonging to the particular speech community. In this dialogic context, Bakhtin (2001) states that a prose is a complex web of literary elements, which refers to the fact that no word can be neutral in a prose, but rather every discourse is created as a response to the previous discourses in the particular text

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besides activating the production of other discourses in the rest of the text as a response to itself. This “dialogic” was not limited to the discourses in a single text by Bakhtin (1981), who also suggested that a novel is created as a response to previous novels in the literature while preparing the ground for future novels as responses to itself as in the case of discourse interaction within prose. Therefore, it would be safe to infer from Bakhtin’s “dialogic” term that no novel can be unique in the cultural context it was produced in; the only uniqueness lies in the combination of words and discourse in the novel by the writer, as suggested by Bakhtin (1981). This “dialogic” term is acknowledged to be the base of intertextuality as can be understood from the interview Mishra (1985) conducted with the prominent literary scholar Riffaterre, who stated in this interview that intertextuality owes more to Bakhtin than to Kristeva, who coined the term “intertextuality”, mediating between Bakhtin’s and Lotman’s ideas. As evidence to “dialogic” term, Bakhtin (2005) refers to the French writer Rabelais, stating that parodies were very popular in the 16th century and the parodies of holy books and social events were reflected in Rabelais’ work. Bakhtin (2005) further adds that Rabelais was profoundly inspired by such writers as Plinius, Athenaios, Macrobius, Plutharkos ve Hippocrates in creating discourses in his works. As another evidence to “dialogic”, Bakhtin (2004) also refers to Dostoyevsky, arguing that Dostoyevsky’s novels were directly linked to menippea developing out of Antique Christian literature and that Dostoyevsky might have been influenced by Apocolocyntosis, Satirikon, Boileau, Fenelon and Fontenelle in his novels.

Out of Bakhtin’s analysis of Dostoyevsky and Rabelais to make “dialogic” term clear, Kristeva (1986) developed her own theory of intertextuality adding a third dimension two Bakhtin’s theory. Kristeva (1986) states that a word has a horizontal axis, belonging to the writer and the text, and a vertical axis, belonging to a synchronic literary corpus, and it is through the intersection of these two axes that a word takes on its meaning. Kristeva (1986) further adds that every word in a text was already present in the previous texts and those previous texts gave birth to a new text, rendering that new text a mosaic of references; therefore every new text is a transformation of already existing texts.

The prominent literary scholar Eco also contributed to intertextuality greatly. Eco (2001) suggests that every text is open to different interpretations by readers and the readers bring their own experiences to a text in which different interpretations are readily available. Therefore, Eco can be said to have a reader-oriented approach and place a great importance on the reader. However, Eco (1996) also states that in bringing their own experiences into the interpretation of a text, readers shouldn’t go too far and mustn’t come up with interpretations not potential in the text. Eco (1996) divides readers into two categories, namely “ideal reader” and “empiric reader”. Eco’s “ideal reader” can be expected to notice all the intertextual allusions in a text while his “empiric reader” can be expected to try to understand only what the writer of the text narrates without referring to their experiences and allusions. As the founder of another reader-oriented approach, Barthes (1977) states that if the writer tells everything in a text, then the interpretation potential of that text is lost, however it is the reader of the text that makes it meaningful as a result of constant re-writing of the text while reading it. Considering Barthes’ approach in terms of intertextuality, Barthes (1977) suggests that a text is not only composed of words coming together in a meaningful way, but rather a text comprises thousands of cultural elements in it. According to this view, since a text bears various cultural and social elements in itself, a reader could activate his experiences of those cultural and social elements in interpreting a particular text. It is beyond doubt that incorporation of cultural and social elements into a text makes it a multi-layered structure and inevitably brings forth the term of intertextuality. This approach can be said to bear similarities to those by Bakhtin and Kristeva.

Besides Eco and Barthes, Riffaterre also adopts a reader-oriented approach to text analysis. Riffaterre (1990) states that intertextual references in a text can only be valid if the reader can grasp them. According to Riffaterre (1990), the writer of a text should deliberately allow the reader to fill in the intertextual reference blanks. In the interview by Mishra (1985), Riffaterre states that a text comes first, followed by the reader and interpretation. It can be inferred from Riffaterre’s arguments that a writer consciously hides certain points in a text to be filled by the reader. Riffaterre (1978) coined the term “hypogram” to refer to a nucleus idea in a text, around which the whole text is created. According to Riffaterre (1978), this “hypogram” could be one word, one sentence, one idea or one cliché taken from an already existing text. This points to the fact that Riffaterre held the belief that a text cannot exist on its own, but rather a text is a product of inspiration from another text or from the culture it was created in, which was already suggested by Bakhtin and Kristeva above. Riffaterre (1978) also coined the term

“ungrammaticality”, defining it as distortions of mainstream set of rules of language in a text, forcing the reader to think on the discourse and meaning of the text more deeply. As the reader feels an ungrammaticality making a thorough reading of the text, he resorts to intertextual references in order to fill in the blanks deliberately left by the writer. Riffaterre (1978) draws an analogy and states that “hypogram” is like pain; even if one is not willing to find it in the text, it is repeated in the text so many times through ungrammaticalities that the reader feels obliged to find it through retroactive reading, which compels the reader not only to return to the previous parts of the particular text but also activate his experience of previous texts in the culture. That retroactive reading triggered by ungrammaticalities in the text allows the reader to grasp the intertextual nature of the text. Aktulum (2011) defines certain terms of Riffaterre, among which are “sense”, “significance”, “ordinary intertextuality” and “obligatory intertextuality”. According to Aktulum (2011), what Riffaterre meant by “ordinary intertextuality” is that the references in a text are clearly given by the writer without requiring much background knowledge from the readers while obligatory intertextuality refers to more elusive references, compelling the reader to be very careful in realizing them and to apply to elaborate background knowledge to understand those implicit references. Because Riffaterre’s intertextuality theory is basis of the current study, it would be helpful to summarize his extensive theory by his own terms: as a reader notices the “ungrammaticalities” in a text, he resorts to a “semiological reading” as suggested by Riffaterre (1978), which makes intertextual references clear and forces the reader to make a “retroactive reading” to “signify” the text, as suggested by Riffaterre (1978), thereby finding the “hypogram” of the text though “ordinary intertextuality” and “obligatory intertextuality” relationships.

2. Method

2.1. Data collection tool

In this study, the 34th edition of Orhan Pamuk’s (2012a) *Sessiz Ev* which was originally published in 1983 was analyzed. While there were no chapter titles in the original novel, each of the 32 chapters was given a title in the 34th edition. It was stated in the back cover of the 34th edition that some details present in the original novel were extracted from the novel in this edition. The novel gives an account of events experienced and remembered in an old family house in Cennethisar, a part of Istanbul during the grandsons’ visit in 1980 summer, which was a period of political and social turmoil in Turkey, leading to a military coup in September. As another data collection tool, the English translation of the novel, *Silent House*, by Pamuk (2012b) which was translated by Finn was analyzed for the evaluation of translation of intertextual allusions. In the translated product, there are chapter titles as in the 34th edition of the novel.

2.2. Data collection procedure

Riffaterre’s (1978) theory and Aktulum’s (2011) classification of intertextual references were taken as the basis in data collection. Aktulum (2011) defines allusion as implicit references in a text. Because there is no direct signal pointing to allusions in a text, they require a rich cultural and literary background from the reader. Aktulum (2011) states that allusions can be references to a literary work, art, history, scientific facts, individuals, songs, a common feeling or politics. The ungrammaticalities were noted during the analysis of the novel and a retroactive reading was made in order to find the allusions. The allusions were determined and their presence in other works was found by the researcher so that the interpretation of the allusions in the novel could be based on concrete grounds. Besides the allusions in the original novel, the translated novel was also analyzed to determine how these allusions were translated into English. In this evaluation, “over-interpretation of meaning” in Kasar’s (2009) classification of translation problems was adopted as the guide.

2.3. Data analysis

The data obtained through retroactive reading of the original novel were analyzed qualitatively. The allusions in the novel were not reported thematically but in the order of their presence in the text. The allusions determined in the text were found in related literature and the allusions were based on the original text they first appeared. Therefore, in reporting results, not only the allusions determined by the researcher but also the references that they originally appeared in and thought to have given inspiration to the writer of the novel in creating those allusions were reported. In reporting the results, the allusions were categorized as “ordinary intertextuality” or “obligatory intertextuality” according to Riffaterre’s theory. In the analysis of translation of allusions, Kasar’s (2009) classification of translation evaluation was used. English translations of the lines with allusions were reported immediately after the Turkish lines so that the translation can be evaluated more clearly.

3. Findings

The novel begins with the old woman and the servant waiting for their grandsons as guests. This can be seen in these lines from the novel:

- “Yarın gelmiyorlar mı?”
- “Geliyorlar büyükhanım, geliyorlar!” dedim. “Tuz serpmeyecek misiniz?”
- “Karışma sen!” dedi. “Geliyorlar mı?”
- “Yarın öğleyin”, dedim. “Telefon ettiler ya...” (p. 8)

- “They are coming tomorrow, aren’t they?”
- “They’re coming, Madam, they’re coming,” I said.. “Weren’t you going to put some salt on that?”
- “You mind your own business!” she said. “Are they coming?”
- “Tomorrow afternoon,” I said. “They called, you know.” (p. 4)

These lines can be thought of as allusions to Chekhov’s (1904 / 2009) play *Cherry Orchard* which also begins with a dialogue between the prospective owner of the house and the servant waiting for the real owners of the house as guests. Even though this is not clearly presented in the novel, a reader could determine this allusion through retroactive reading. Since this allusion is not a clear one but rather an implicit one, this can be regarded as an “obligatory intertextuality” in Riffaterre’s theory. In the English translation, there is no over-interpretation by the translator since this reference to Chekhov was not explicitly stated in the translated product. An English reader of the novel has to make a retroactive reading to grasp this allusion, too.

As another allusion in the novel, the deceased husband of the old woman, Selahattin says:

- Olmazsa Avrupa’ya değil Selanik’e gideriz, niye memleket dışına çıkalım, Şam’a gideriz. (p. 24)
- Or we can go to Salonica instead of Europe, why should we leave the country, we’ll go to Damascus. (p.24)

There’s ungrammaticality here because Salonica and Damascus are not within the borders of Turkey today. While Salonica is a part of Greece, Damascus is the capital city of Syria today. However, they are interpreted as within the borders of Turkey according to these lines. This ungrammaticality forces the reader to make retroactive reading and infer that these two cities were part of Turkey in the past. Duman and Tuna (2012) state that Sultan Abdulhamid was dethroned in 1909. Yavuz (2008) states that Salonica was lost to Greece by Ottomans in 1912. In the novel, Selahattin came up with this statement during the time of Sultan Abdulhamid. Therefore, these cities were part of Turkey at the time of this discourse. Because this is an implicit reference to history, it requires the reader to activate his history background. Therefore, this allusion is categorized as “obligatory intertextuality” in Riffaterre’s theory. There is no over-interpretation in English translation, so an English reader also has to activate his history background in order to solve this ungrammaticality and find the intertextual reference.

Another allusion determined in the novel is when the old lady remembers a past event as she rises from her bed to drink some water. The old lady recounts this event as follows:

- Bir keresinde, bir arıyı, üzerine bardak kapatıp hapsedmişim. Canım sıkıldıkça yatağımdan kalkar bakardım: Bir çıkış yolu olmadığını anlayana kadar, bardağın içinde iki gün iki gece gezindi ve sonra bir köşeye çekilip kıpırdamadan durmaktan ve beklemekten neyi beklediğini bilmeden beklemekten başka yapılacak hiçbir şey olmadığını öğrendi. O zaman tiksindim ondan, iğrendim, panjurları açtım, masanın kenarına sürükleyerek çektiğim bardağı üzerinden kaldırdım ki kaçsın, ama aptal yaratık uçup gitmedi ki! (p. 25)
- Once, I placed a glass over a bee and imprisoned it. When I was bored I would get out of bed and look at it. It wandered around in the glass for two days until it understood that there was no way out and then it decided that there was nothing to do but sit in a corner motionless and wait and wait, not knowing what it was waiting for. When I got tired of it, fed up, really, I opened the shutters before sliding the glass over to the edge of the table and lifting it up so the bee could fly away, but the stupid creature didn't fly away! (p.25)

There is allusion to a scientific fact here. Maier and Seligman (1976) report Seligman and Overmier's experiment with dogs in which they applied shock to dogs and suggested that dogs suffered from "learned helplessness" in the course of time. Even though learned helplessness is a familiar concept to many, these lines can be categorized as allusions since there is no direct reference to the concept or experiment, but rather the reader has to activate his background knowledge to associate this event to the concept of learned helplessness. The translated version of this allusion also disguises the concept of learned helplessness but recounts the event in such a way that it requires English readers to make a retroactive reading and find that allusion, too. This can be categorized under "obligatory intertextuality" in Riffaterre's theory.

Having read her deceased husband's unpublished encyclopaedia, the old lady recounts what she can remember from that encyclopaedia:

- İnsanın dedesi goril maddesi için yazmış; Allah'ın varlığı sorununun, artık bilimlerin Batı'da gösterdiği inanılmaz ilerleme sonunda bir gülünç sorun olarak bir kenara atıverdiğine tanık olduğumuz bu günlerde yazmış. (p. 28)
- He had written a part of an article about gorillas being the grandfathers of men; he wrote in those days that the incredible advances of the sciences in the West had now made God's existence a ridiculous question to be cast aside. (p.29)

This is also an illusion in that while no direct reference is made to Darwin and his evolution theory, the reader comes up against ungrammaticality like "gorilla as the grandfather of men". This ungrammaticality serves to trigger the reader to make a retroactive reading and find that there is reference to Darwin's theory here. Francis (2007) states that in the closing part of the book, Darwin put forward that men had a lot of genetic similarities to other animals and he preferred a gorilla as the ancestor of mankind. In the translation, Darwin and his theory are not explicit given; therefore, the allusion in the original novel can also be witnessed in the translated product. This allusion can be categorized as "ordinary intertextuality" in Riffaterre's theory because the animal gorilla' being the grandfather of mankind is well-known, as a result of which the reader can easily determine the allusion here.

While the old lady is thinking of the cheer of the magpie bird that she will hear in the morning, she recounts an event:

- Saksağanların hırsız olduğu doğru mudur? Kraliçelerin, prenseslerin mücevherleri; bir saksağan çalmış, haydi düşmüşler peşine. O kuşu, o kadar ağırlıkta nasıl uçtuğunu merak ederim. (p. 29)
- Is it true that magpies are thieves? The jewels of queens and princesses, a magpie grabs them, and everybody takes off after it. I wonder how a bird can fly with all that weight. (p. 30)

These lines allude to Rossini's opera *La gazza ladra* (The Thieving Magpie) in which a magpie bird steals the valuable items in a house. Even though there is no direct reference to the composer or the opera, the ungrammaticality in these lines leads the reader to make a retroactive reading and find that this story was told in Rossini's opera. This can be categorized as an allusion in Aktulum's (2011) classification and as an obligatory intertextuality in Riffaterre's theory. While the original lines are told by the old lady in Turkish Simple Past Tense,

they are translated into English in Simple Present Tense. Simple Present Tense can be used in summaries of art works in English, therefore an English reader may easily feel that the old lady is giving the summary of an art work here while a Turkish reader may not feel the same. As a result, the translator seems to have over-interpreted this allusion and the translated product might not yield the reader the same joy of finding the allusion as it does in Turkish.

When the old lady remembers her husband's selling all her jewellery to a Jewish merchant, there are some allusions to the Turkish revolution and reforms in the first years of Republican era:

- Bir yıl sonra, elinde aynı çantayla küpenin öteki tekini almaya geldiğinde Yahudi'nin başında gene aynı şapka vardı. Sekiz ay sonra elmaslı bileziklerimden birincisini almaya geldiğinde o başındaki şapkayı Müslümanlar da giymek zorundaydı. (p. 109)
- A year later, with the same strange bag in his hand and strange hat on his head, to get the other ruby earring of the pair. By the time he visited eight months later to get the first of my diamond bracelets, Muslims were required to wear that same hat instead of the fez.(p.122)

Candan (2010) states that the Hat Act was enacted in Turkish Parliament on the 24th of November in 1925. These lines allude to that Act without making any direct reference, therefore they can be categorized under obligatory intertextuality in Riffaterre's theory. In the English version, the translator used "fez" while it was not present in the original text, as a result of which this allusion seems to have been violated because the English readers of the translated product can easily understand the Turkish reforms seeing the phrase "instead of fez". Therefore the translator can be said to have over-interpreted these lines.

- Elmaslı bileziklerin ikincisini almaya geldiğinde yıl, artık 1345 değil, 1926 idi. (p. 109)
- The year he came for the second diamond bracelet wouldn't be called 1345 anymore but 1926, by the Christian calendar. (p.123)

Candan (2010) indicates that The Gregorian calendar was adopted in Turkey instead of Islamic calendar on the 26th of December in 1925. In Turkish text, there is allusion to this fact without ever direct statement of calendar, however in the English text the translator seems to have over-interpreted the meaning adding "the Christian calendar". This direct reference to Christian calendar violates the allusion and turns the original obligatory intertextuality into ordinary intertextuality in Riffaterre's theory. The great discrepancy between the years disillusions the reader and brings forth ungrammaticality while this ungrammaticality is lost in the translated product.

Another allusion encountered in the text is when the old lady remembers some piece of advice from her mother:

- En güzel uykudur öğlen uykusu derdi annem. Öğlen yemeği üstüne en güzel rüyaları görürsün. (p. 218)
- The afternoon nap, my mother used to say, is the best of all kinds of sleep. One has the best dreams after eating lunch. (p.257)

Even though this seems to be a plain piece of advice from a mother to a daughter on the surface, it indeed alludes to Prophet Mohammad's afternoon nap called siesta. Because the old lady was raised in a conservatory family, this religious allusion can safely be drawn from the text. Boz (1991) quotes that an afternoon dinner lasting half an hour is equal to two-hour-night sleep, and Prophet Mohammad advised half an hour of siesta to his followers. This allusion can be categorized as obligatory intertextuality in Riffaterre's theory because there is no direct reference to any religious notion and signifying this allusion requires an extensive background of religious reading and thinking. In the translated version, there is no over-interpretation nor any direct statement of religious terms, therefore an English reader also has to feel the ungrammaticality and make a retroactive reading to find this intertextual allusion.

It would also be safe to interpret the old lady's following account as an allusion:

- Sonra ağlamaklı bir iniltiyle pencereye doğru sallanarak iki adım attı, bir an, ne tuhaf, pencerenin kanatlarını açıp dışarıya, fırtınaya atlayacak ve keşfinin coşkusuyla kanat vurup biraz uçacak sandım, o heyecanla, iki üç kol vuruşluk uçacak ve sonra gerçeği anlayarak düşüp çakılarak ölecek sandım. (p. 300)
- Then he staggered two steps toward the window half weeping, and for a moment I had the very strange impression that he would open it and jump out into the storm, flap his wings and for a little while remain aloft on the joy of his discovery until, realizing the truth, he fell to the ground and died. (p. 359)

The ungrammaticality in these lines leads the reader to think of Archimedes reported by Stein (1999) to have run out of the bath naked shouting “Eureka” having found the solution accidentally to a problem he had been pondering on for a long time. Just as Archimedes ran out of the bath after a scientific discovery, Selahattin would get out of the house very excitedly after his discovery. Because there is no direct reference to Archimedes here, this can be categorized as an allusion in Aktulum’s (2011) classification. Moreover, this is obligatory intertextuality in Riffaterre’s theory. The same is the case in the translated version since there is no direct statement nor any over-interpretation for English readers, who would need to make a retroactive reading to signify this intertextual allusion.

The last allusion in the text is to Chekhov’s (1904 / 2009) play *Cherry Orchard* as is the case in the first allusion. Towards the end of the novel, the old lady recounts these lines:

- Zaman durmuş ve bir tek ben kalmışım ve işte dehşete kapılan umutsuz sesim bir daha boş yere, boş yere aşağıya sesleniyor ve bastonum çaresizlikle yere, yere vuruyor ve sanki kimse duymuyor beni: Yalnızca terk edilmiş koltuklar, sandalyeler, üstleri ağır ağır toz tutan masalar, kapalı kapılar, kendi kendilerine çıtırdayan, umutsuz eşyalar. (p. 331)
- Time had stopped, and only I remained, with my panicked voice calling out again downstairs for nothing, and my cane knocking again and again on the floor, and still it seemed there was no one to hear me: only empty armchairs, tables slowly accumulating dust, closed doors, hopeless furniture that creaked all on its own. (p. 397)

These lines are in the closing chapter of the text. They remind the reader of the last scene of the play *Cherry Orchard* in which there is only a little furniture to be sold, there are no curtains on the windows, and suitcase is in front of the door as if the house is going to be deserted soon. The translated version also makes no direct reference but only alludes to this last scene of the play. Therefore, both the beginning and the end of the text allude to the play *Cherry Orchard*. This can be classified as obligatory intertextuality in Riffaterre’s theory.

4. Discussion

Many allusions have been identified and reported in the text. The whole novel was created in such a complex allusion web that it is impossible for the reader to continue to read the novel without making a retroactive reading and pondering on the deep structure of the novel. Aktulum (2011) states that intertextual readers are aware of the presence of sub-texts supporting the main texts while novel readers regard this a nightmare. As can be understood from this, Aktulum regards intertextual texts and novel as two different things, implying that there may be intertextual references in a novel but there is only a totally different genre called intertextual text.

In this novel, there are historical, scientific, religious and literary allusions. All these allusions are made clear to the reader through ungrammaticalities as suggested by Riffaterre (1978). The reader, having realized these ungrammaticalities feels obliged to make a retroactive reading as already suggested by Riffaterre (1978). As the readers make this retroactive reading, they come up with solutions to these ungrammaticalities activating their already existing background knowledge of the world or literature, which brings a great joy to the readers.

Intertextuality must not be limited to literature analysis only; it can also be applied in translation act or translation analysis. A competent translator should be able to provide the same satisfaction to the target language readers as the source culture readers get from the text. When there is an implicit message like an allusion in an original text, a translator could allow room for a similar gap in the target language, compelling the readers to try to find the allusion thereby allowing them to get as much pleasure as possible from the text. Therefore, intertextual

references and allusions can be the starting point for translators as well as translation editors or translation studies researchers.

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