

CRITICISM IN MOTION: SHIFTING THE FOCUS IN THEATRE (TRANSLATION)
CRITICISM FROM PAGE TO STAGE IN THE LIGHT OF HAROLD PINTER'S
THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

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Introduction

The work of art, in all forms, has a tendency to stimulate a reaction of reflection upon its receptors. As the thunderbolt of the artist, the work of art, addresses its addressee in a distinctive fashion through the lightning streaks it strikes on the horizon of anticipations (surely not expectations) of the receptor. Either by enabling the receiver to meditate and keep discovering new aspects, or by constantly turning the expectations of the addressee upside down, the work of art intones in a magical voice the songs of innocence and of experience.²⁴⁰ Sigmund Freud was perceptive enough to maintain this idea: “*some of the grandest and most overwhelming creations of art are still unresolved riddles to our understanding. We admire them, we feel overawed by them, but we are unable to say what they represent to us.*”²⁴¹ The point here, of course, is neither the existence of a so-called hidden message inherent in a given work of art, nor the potential way/s of exposing a secret information into view during the course of the interpretation. Rather, the receptors’ willingness—or to put it more bluntly—the receptors’ desire to open his or herself to the artwork, deriving from the stimulus of the work of art itself thereof. This wish can also give rise to a desire to plunge into the depths of the work.

Plunging into the depths of the work: whether the agent in question is the reader, or the viewer, or the listener, or the spectator, the act implies a strenuous activity; a strenuous activity that is highly likely for the receptor to find him or herself in the paradoxical position of trying to open one door of interpretation after another, one door of reading after another, one door of perception after another, one door of viewing after another, one door of listening after another...The list with respect to the doors at work throughout the reflection process

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²⁴⁰ The phrase herein most certainly refers to William Blake’s distinguished poetic works, namely, *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. See, William Blake, **Songs of Innocence and of Experience**, Robert N. Essick (ed.), California: Huntington Library Press, [1794] 2008.

²⁴¹ Sigmund Freud, “The Moses of Michelangelo” [1914], trans. James Strachey, in **Writings on Art and Literature**, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 123.

upon the artwork is boundless. In lieu of an explanation one finds a labyrinthine puzzle in the work of art, always demanding more and more reflection from the receptor. Commenting upon that intricate nature of literary works, Wolfgang Iser makes a significant point: “*a literary object can never be given final definition.*”²⁴² In fact, Iser’s remark seems appropriate to each and every artwork that invites its receptors to embark on an interpretative journey within the convoluted realms of the piece. Still, the chances are that one can stagger in that reflective travel undertaken under the numerous lightning strikes in the skies. The flash of lightning, which illuminates the path of the (weary) traveller by opening more doors than it closes, is what one comes to call criticism.

The image that is conjured up here is by no means a romanticised depiction of the relationship between the receptor and the artwork. It is an infamous fact that things do not work in this way in practice. Indeed, one can hardly speak of a receptor whose time and energy is entirely devoted to that reflective journey within the sphere of the work of art in the age of supersonic reproduction, as Walter Benjamin would probably have remarked.²⁴³ Likewise, one can rarely offer a concrete definition of an ideal receptor. After all, what is concretised in a single definition can barely apply to the empirical receptor, who is more or less bent to violate idealisations. Yet, the aim at this point is to direct attention to the willingness—the desire—of the receptor to open his or herself to the work of art, as well as the illuminative role of criticism in the course of the interpretation. It is, moreover, important to underscore the mobility intrinsic to the critical act. In the words of George Steiner, “*the motion of criticism is one of ‘stepping back from’ in exactly the sense in which one steps back from a painting on a wall in order to perceive it better.*”²⁴⁴ Steiner’s observation is noteworthy in that it ascribes to the critic the function of an external eye that simultaneously watches over and illuminates the path of the traveller all the way through that pensive voyage undertaken within the depths of the work.

Notwithstanding this illuminative function of criticism, the word, by and large, acquired negative connotations throughout the history, all the more so in the present time. Even the word itself provokes one to frown down and turn a deaf ear to criticism. This is not without reasons. In the first place, criticism requisitely entails value judgment/s. The fact that the bulk of the value judgments emerging from the critical act shut the doors of interpretation

²⁴² Wolfgang Iser, **Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology**, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, [1989] 1993, p. 9

²⁴³ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” [1936], trans. Harry Zohn, in Hannah Arendt (ed.) **Illuminations**, New York: Schocken Books, 2007, pp. 217-251

²⁴⁴ George Steiner, “‘Critic’/‘Reader’”, in **New Literary History** 10: 3, p. 423

where they were supposed to open them is a supreme irony which invites special consideration. Under those circumstances, criticism turns out to be an apparatus that reduces the artwork to a single viewpoint: biased to associate a given work of art with a particular explanation, the critic slates any other way of perception, and as a matter of fact, provides an ostensible analysis that either makes or breaks the piece at hand. More often than not, criticism—to borrow an image from Samuel Taylor Coleridge—turns out to be *the* albatross round the neck of an artist. The consequences of that kind of (didactic) criticism are notorious. They can highly be felt in all the ins and outs of artistic life. Two examples from Turkey will suffice to sustain the point.

Theatre criticism: One truly misses the late Füsün Akatlı, who placed momentous emphasis on the boundless, open-ended, as well as the unrestrained nature of criticism²⁴⁵ in her career. While this kind of criticism can play the crucial part in the entire writings of one of the prominent critics of Turkey, the extent to which the actual critical practice reverberates with this nature of the critical act is debatable. To a considerable degree, the observation that Zehra İpşiroğlu made back in the 1990s vis-à-vis the two types of critic, that is to say, “*the one who gives full marks to the production and the one whose blood runs cold after witnessing a performance*”²⁴⁶ * seems to be valid for the Turkish theatre criticism of the twenty first century. This is a time frame, “*in which the criterion of the value judgments in theatre criticism has been reduced to such binary oppositions as ‘I liked/I didn’t like’, ‘done/not done’, ‘good/bad’ that these criteria cause theatre criticism to be an abusive piece of writing that attacks names and institutions instead of providing a constructive analysis of a given performance.*”²⁴⁷ Within this bleak picture regarding the current state of affairs of theatre criticism in Turkey, one surely spots writings that aim to execute the illuminative function of criticism, after a thorough examination of the literature either in the scholarly journals,²⁴⁸ or individual studies dedicated to theatre criticism,²⁴⁹ and, by extension, to Theatre Studies. One certainly spots, but with great difficulty. The dearth of constructive theatre criticism prevails, and this, by no means, is a generalisation.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Füsün Akatlı, **Kırmızı Gagah Pelikan**, İstanbul: Kırmızı Yayınları, 2010.

²⁴⁶ Zehra İpşiroğlu, **Eleştirinin Eleştirisi**, İstanbul: Mitos Boyut, [1992] 1998, pp. 75-76

* Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are my own.

²⁴⁷ Burç İdem Dinçel, “Chabert’i Hatırlamak, Beckett’i Düşünmek”, in **Mimesis Tiyatro/Çeviri Araştırma Dergisi** no.18, İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011, p. 324

²⁴⁸ Such as, *The Journal of Theatre Criticism and Dramaturgy Department of Istanbul University* and *The Journal of Theatre Studies* of the Theatre Department of Ankara University, and *Mimesis* of Boğaziçi University.

²⁴⁹ See for instance, Esen Çamurdan, **Şiddet ile Oynamak**, İstanbul: Mitos Boyut, 2004; Zehra İpşiroğlu, **Eleştirinin Eleştirisi**, İstanbul: Mitos Boyut, [1992] 1998; Hasibe Kalkan Kocabay, **Tiyatroda Göstergebilim**, İstanbul: E Yayınları, 2008; and Fakiye Özsoysal, **Oyunlarda Kadınlar**, İstanbul: E Yayınları, 2008.

Theatre-translation criticism: A topic related to the former. Theatre criticism survives one way or another, whereas one can barely speak of the existence of theatre-translation criticism. The situation is closely tied to “*the amateurism*”²⁵⁰ of translation criticism within the domain of Translation Studies. There is a huge gap between the theory and practice of translation: “*whilst the translation criticisms published in one of the most significant periodicals of Turkey that is devoted to translation, namely, Metis Çeviri, make almost no mention of theory, the translation criticisms which do provide room for theory, rather use it in a prescriptive way.*”²⁵¹ The translation criticisms published in *Metis Çeviri* set out an interesting example owing to the fact that they represent the condition of translation criticism in Turkey in the late 1980s and the early 1990s.²⁵² Even so, it seems that things have changed drastically in the last two decades in Turkey since the majority of translation criticism became an abusive piece of writing just like the bulk of theatre criticism.²⁵³ Apparently, Çağlar Tanyeri’s search for “*a translation criticism for the translator*”²⁵⁴ keeps going on. Behind the absence of theatre-translation criticism, moreover, lies the place ascribed to theatre translation within the realm of Translation Studies. The topic has suffered enough from the eternal debate on drama translation on the one hand, and theatre translation on the other; or in other words, the so-called “faithful” translations of dramatic texts versus the “performable” translations of theatre plays.²⁵⁵ While most of the translation scholars were busy with trying to comprehend the nature of theatre translation by means of tackling it from the perspective of literary translation, the scenic dimensions of play texts have been banished from the sphere of Translation Studies. This neglect towards the notion of performance surfaces in the lack of theatre-translation criticism which monitors the textual and scenic planes of plays in translation.

²⁵⁰ Raymond van den Broeck, “Second Thoughts on Translation Criticism: A Model of its Analytic Function” in Theo Hermans (ed.), **The Manipulation of Literature, Studies in Literary Translation**, Croom Helm, London/Sydney, 1985, p. 55

²⁵¹ Burç İdem Dinçel, “Çeviri Eleştirisinde Yorumbilimsel Sürecin Önemi ve James Joyce’un *Sürgünler* Oyunu Bağlamındaki Yansımaları”, in **Mimesis Tiyatro/Çeviri Araştırma Dergisi** no.13, İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2007, p. 348

²⁵² See for example, Nesrin Kasap, “Kendine Ait Bir Oda”, in **Metis Çeviri** 2, 1988, pp. 176-180 and Serdar Rıfat Kırkoğlu, “Platon’un Mağarasındaki Çevirmen”, in **Metis Çeviri** 19, 1992, pp. 123-126.

²⁵³ An obvious example of this kind of abusive translation criticism would be Celâl Üster’s article (2003) on the “murder” of Agatha Christie.

²⁵⁴ http://www.cevbir.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=104:kucukilan&catid=37:yazicizi&Itemid=75

²⁵⁵ For a full treatment of the issue, as well as a critical examination of the existing literature devoted to the study and practice of theatre translation, see Burç İdem Dinçel, **A Critical Study of the Turkish Translations of Samuel Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape* and Its Interpretations within the Turkish Theatrical System**, unpublished MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2010, pp. 2-7

Why should this be? On the face of it, criticism itself is in a cleft stick, in which it becomes almost impossible to talk about the illuminative role of the critical act, interpretative journeys, opening doors, and so on. Glancing at the examples taken from Theatre Studies and Translation Studies, it can be argued that criticism has, to a certain extent, come to a standstill. This situation calls to mind the never-ending problem of objectivity against subjectivity. It goes without saying that the futile search for objectivity, or in Akatlı's words, "*the fetish that we have borrowed from the success of the nineteenth century positivism in bestowing prestige upon science, and still did not hand back,*"²⁵⁶ makes the critical act come to a deadlock. On the other hand, subjectivity impedes criticism from offering new modes of interpretation by forcing the value judgments upon the artist. As Steiner puts it, "*there never has been, there never can be any **objective criticism** in the proper sense of the term.*"²⁵⁷ If such is the case, how can the critic walk a thin line between objectivity and subjectivity?

Cannot. But one can try nonetheless. Problematising this vain search for objectivity in literature, Roland Barthes passes a remarkable remark: "*It will thus be necessary to bid farewell to the idea that the science of literature can teach us the meaning to be attributed infallibly to a work: it will neither give nor even **rediscover** any meaning, but it will describe according to which logic it is that meanings are engendered in a manner which is capable of being **accepted** by the symbolic logic of humankind.*"²⁵⁸ The vital verb that Barthes deploys in his inspection is "to describe" and it has strong connotations for the ongoing discussion as regards to theatre criticism, as well as theatre-translation criticism. Actually, there exists a quasi-paradoxical relationship between these two fields of studies. They are extremely near to, yet extraordinarily remote from each other. As was argued elsewhere, however, "*theatre-translation criticism and theatre criticism are not a far cry from one another in terms of the emphasis they place on the notion of performance.*"²⁵⁹ Performance analysis, or a critical glance at the production through its reception by the theatrical circles, can function as a bridgehead between theatre-translation criticism and theatre criticism. Hence, the mobility of the critical act, and the need to shift the focus in theatre (translation) criticism from "page" to "stage". Furthermore, by taking into account what has been discussed hitherto, it becomes possible for one to rephrase Barthes' remark as, "theatre (translation) criticism seeks to

²⁵⁶ Füsün Akatlı, *Kültürsüzlüğümüzün Kışı*, İstanbul: Dünya Kitapları, 2003, p. 242

²⁵⁷ George Steiner, "'Critic'/'Reader'", in *New Literary History* 10: 3, p. 425, emphasis in the original.

²⁵⁸ Roland Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, trans. and ed. Katrine Pilcher Keuneman, New York: Continuum, [1987] 2007, p. 31, emphasis in the original.

²⁵⁹ Burç İdem Dinçel, *A Critical Study of the Turkish Translations of Samuel Beckett's Krapps's Last Tape and Its Interpretations within the Turkish Theatrical System*, unpublished MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2010, p. 1

describe according to which logic it is that performances of plays in translation are produced in a manner that is up to represent the particular signs of performance immanent to the dramaturgy of the work in question.” In this respect, “*descriptive theatre (translation) criticism*,”²⁶⁰ can thus be deemed as a plausible approach to the study of performances of plays in translation. At this juncture of discussion, it is imperative to underline that “descriptive theatre (translation) criticism”, does by no means amount to a compromise between objectivity and subjectivity. After all, “*the function of the description of the work in the overall act of criticism is to ground the other operations of criticism, especially evaluation*”²⁶¹; an evaluation that can illuminate the work of art under observation.

As a case in point, one might think of the treatment of Harold Pinter’s (1930-2008) first full length play *The Birthday Party* (1958) by the critics. “*The play was taken off after only one week*”, writes D. Keith Peacock, “*having attracted minimal audiences—the smallest being six for the Thursday matinee—and having been savaged by the press. For the most part the critics found the play incomprehensible and, consequently, irritating.*”²⁶² While the majority of the critics of the era were engaged in dragging *The Birthday Party* through the mud, Irwing Wardle, a notable dramatist and theatre critic himself, coined the term “comedy of menace” upon witnessing the play. Wardle’s commentary on the piece is worth quoting: “*The Birthday Party exemplifies the type of comic menace which gave rise to this article. For in the play, menace, itself a meretricious and easily manufactured fictional device, stands for something more substantial: destiny. Comedy enables the committed agents and victims of destruction to come and off duty.*”²⁶³ The fact that this phrase persists to occupy a certain place within the terminology of Pinter criticism until the present time demonstrates how the value judgments emerging from the critical act have the potential of opening more and more doors of interpretation.

What then of the Turkish translation of this “comedy of menace” and its production thereof? This article aspires to provide an answer to this question by scrutinising Memet Fuat’s Turkish translation of the play (1965), as well as the City Theatre of Istanbul Municipality production of the piece directed by Yıldırım Şahinler (2011) with the purpose of monitoring the textual and scenic dimensions of the work. As can be inferred from the discussion held thus far, the approach to be developed in the present paper will be

²⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 8, 81.

²⁶¹ Noël Carroll, **On Criticism**, London and New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 89

²⁶² D. Keith Peacock, **Harold Pinter and the New British Theatre**, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997, p. 61

²⁶³ Irwing Wardle, “The Comedy of Menace” [1958a], in Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, and Owen Hale (eds.), **The Encore Reader**, London: Methuen, 1965, p. 91

“descriptive theatre (translation) criticism. What is more, the theoretical framework and the methodology of the study will derive benefit from the model that was proposed elsewhere for the analysis of the performances of plays in translation,²⁶⁴ together with Antoine Berman’s approach to translation criticism.²⁶⁵ The purpose of doing so is to establish a framework which aims to integrate Berman’s approach into the descriptive paradigm of Translation Studies. In tune with the operation of the model, the first section of the article concentrates on the dramaturgical analysis of Pinter’s *The Birthday Party* so as to be able to identify the features of the piece that have direct relevance to the production of the piece. The second part of the paper dwells upon Fuat’s *Doğumgünü Partisi* with the intention to examine how the dramaturgical features of the play have been rendered in the translation. The third and the final part of the study, shifts the focus of attention from “page” to “stage” in theatre (translation) criticism through a critical glance at Şahinler’s interpretation of the text by taking particular cognisance of the reception of the production. Thus, instead of providing a comprehensive performance analysis, the last section of the article will opt to bring the reception of Şahinler’s *Doğum Günü Partisi* into focus. Hence the criticism of the current practice/s of theatre criticism in Turkey.

Harold Pinter’s *The Birthday Party*

According to Richard Schechner, “*the essential characteristic of Pinter’s work is its conceptual incompleteness. Structurally each play is complete. It begins, develops, ends, and each part is organically joined to the others. But the framework around the plays, the ‘conceptual world’ out of which the plays emerge, is sparse, fragmented.*”²⁶⁶ The “conceptual world” that Schechner refers to, goes very much hand in hand with the indefinite structure of Harold Pinter’s plays. Thanks to this fabric, the plays become open to various interpretations that would be undertaken by the readers, audience, directors, actors, scenic designers, and so forth. Needless to say, this structure of the works require from the spectator constant involvement in the course of a given production of a Pinter play. Tom Milne, in his seminal article on the works of John Whiting, Pinter, and John Arden, highlights the significance of

²⁶⁴ Burç İdem Dinçel, **A Critical Study of the Turkish Translations of Samuel Beckett’s *Krapps’s Last Tape* and Its Interpretations within the Turkish Theatrical System**, unpublished MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2010, pp. 100-104

²⁶⁵ Antoine Berman, **Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne**, trans. and ed. Françoise Massardier-Kenney, Kent: Kent State University Press, 2009

²⁶⁶ Richard Schechner, “Puzzling Pinter”, in **The Tulane Drama Review** vol. 11, no. 2, 1966, p. 177

the audience input by addressing them directly: “*If you withhold your participation, you sit back in disbelief; these worlds become dull, obscure, meaningless.*”²⁶⁷ Complementary to this comment is Schechner’s remark regarding the spectators: “*The audience is left to supply whatever conceptual framework it can, but no single rational frame will answer all the questions.*”²⁶⁸ It is important to note that both of these observations draw attention to the enigmatic nature of the playwright’s works and the audience participation necessary in a production of a Pinter play.

Of course, Pinter was not the only playwright who puzzled the theatregoers of the late 1950s. Amongst the three aesthetic influences that Pinter acknowledges, that is to say, “*Beckett, Kafka and American gangster films,*”²⁶⁹ the name of Samuel Beckett catches the eye. Actually, Beckett was more than an influence for Pinter. In a personal letter addressed to a friend (dated 1954) and was published in *Beckett at Sixty*, Pinter penned these words in a rather intimate fashion: “*The farther he goes the more good it does me. I don’t want philosophies, tracts, dogmas, creeds, way outs, truths, answers, nothing from the bargain basement. He is the most courageous, remorseless writer going and the more he grinds my nose in the shit the more I am grateful to him.*”²⁷⁰ Thus, it is not surprising to observe how Pinter salutes Beckett twice in his *The Birthday Party* by employing more or less the same dramaturgical strategies with those of Beckett. The first salute can be pinpointed through a glance at the exchange between Didi and Gogo at the early phases of *Waiting for Godot*: “VLADIMIR: You should have been a poet. ESTRAGON: I was. (*Gesture towards his rags.*) Isn’t that obvious. *Silence.*”²⁷¹ The echo of this exchange can be heard in the dialogue between Meg and Stanley in the first act of *The Birthday Party*: “MEG (*sitting at the table*). Have you played the piano in all those places before? STANLEY. Played the piano? I’ve played the piano all over the world. All over the country. (*Pause*). I once gave a concert.”²⁷² Pinter seems to pay the second connotative tribute in his play to *Endgame*. When Hamm asks Clov why he stays with him, he also responds with a question: “Why do you keep me? HAMM: There’s no one else. CLOV: There’s nowhere else. *Pause.*”²⁷³ The lack of a place to go is almost identical

²⁶⁷ Tom Milne, “The Hidden Face of Violence” [1960], in Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, and Owen Hale (eds.), **The Encore Reader**, London: Methuen, 1965, p. 123

²⁶⁸ Richard Schechner, “Puzzling Pinter”, in **The Tulane Drama Review** vol. 11, no. 2, 1966, p. 177

²⁶⁹ Irwing Wardle, “The Comedy of Menace” [1958a], in Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, and Owen Hale (eds.), **The Encore Reader**, London: Methuen, 1965, p. 91

²⁷⁰ Harold Pinter, “Beckett”, in W. J. McCormack (ed.) **Beckett at Sixty: A Festschrift**, London: Calder & Boyars, 1967, p. 86

²⁷¹ Samuel Beckett, **Waiting for Godot**, London: Faber and Faber, [1956] 1971, p. 12

²⁷² Harold Pinter, **The Birthday Party**, London: Faber and Faber, [1959] 1991, p. 22

²⁷³ Samuel Beckett, **Endgame**, London: Faber and Faber, [1957] 1969, p. 14

in *The Birthday Party*: “LULU. But where could we go? STANLEY. Nowhere. There’s nowhere to go. So we could just go. It wouldn’t matter.”²⁷⁴ Vague references to the past, the function of “pauses and silences” together with the absence of a place to go can be considered as the features that three plays appear to share in common.

On the surface though. In spite of Beckett’s influence, Pinter progresses in his own direction. He perplexes; but does so, by playing the game of playwriting for the most part within the boundaries of the theatrical traditions available for him. Take, for instance, Eugène Scribe’s (1791-1861) concept of “well-made play” which foregrounds that “*plot without much else makes better drama than much else without plot.*”²⁷⁵ To a considerable degree, this particular emphasis on plot allows the audience follow the thread of a given “well-made play”. Additionally, by allowing the dramatist to work within the framework of a single thread via adding plot twists, climaxes, revelations, and so forth, this tradition has been quite influential throughout the history of theatre. In the words of Marvin Carlson, “*the influence of Scribe on subsequent drama can hardly be overestimated. The realistic dramatists of the later nineteenth century—most notably Ibsen—drew upon his careful construction and preparation of effects, and through their example the well-made play became and still remains the traditional model of play construction.*”²⁷⁶ As can be deduced from Carlson’s surveillance, “well-made play” works quite well with the realistic theatre tradition. But not only that convention; one can plausibly include the bourgeois drama, in which, such themes as, “*the daily life and the domestic affairs*”²⁷⁷ become indispensable to the plays at hand.

It is worth bearing these in mind since both of the theatre traditions in question have close associations with Pinter’s *The Birthday Party*. No matter how Pinter baffles his receptors, there is a plot in the play: two men (Goldberg and McCann) appear out of nowhere, throw an obscure birthday party to a man (Stanley Webber) living in seclusion, and the next morning they take the recluse and off they go. Just like there is a plot, a theme comes out from the play as well: “*a man who has withdrawn to protect his illusions is not going to be helped by being propelled into the outer world.*”²⁷⁸ What is more, the realistic plain of the

²⁷⁴ Harold Pinter, **The Birthday Party**, London: Faber and Faber, [1959] 1991, p. 26

²⁷⁵ Eric Bentley, **What is Theatre?**, New York: Horizon Press, 1956, p. 67

²⁷⁶ Marvin Carlson, **Theories of the Theatre**, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, [1984] 1993, p. 216

²⁷⁷ Burç İdem Dinçel, “Burjuva Dramı, Denis Diderot ve Tiyatroda Gerçekçilik”, in **İstanbul Üniversitesi Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi** no. 8, İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006, p. 54

²⁷⁸ Irwing Wardle, “The Birthday Party” [1958b], in Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, and Owen Hale (eds.), **The Encore Reader**, London: Methuen, 1965, pp. 77

play surfaces in its “*lower-class domestic setting*.”²⁷⁹ During the course of the play the bourgeois world, is depicted through such characters as Meg, Petey and Lulu; the couple running the boarding house and their neighbour respectively. If Pinter’s textual strategies in *The Birthday Party* derive from such familiar theatrical traditions, how, then, the playwright can manage to bewilder his addressees over and over again? It goes without saying that the answer to this question can be found by dint of a close examination of the hallmarks of Pinter’s dramaturgy within the context of *The Birthday Party*. It can, therefore, be seen that these distinctive features immanent to the theatre of Pinter—and to *The Birthday Party* in particular—are “ambiguity”, “verbal violence”, as well as the “pauses and silences”, and the playwright’s intertwining the real and the surreal thereof.

The Birthday Party typifies these dramaturgical traits. Pinter’s interweaving of the real and the surreal, for one, evokes Schechner’s examination of the play. The play, as observed by Schechner, “*merges two actions and represents them in varying, disparate rhythms. The first—or inner—action concerns Stanley, McCann, and Goldberg,*”²⁸⁰ whereas the representatives of the daily life and domestic affairs, “—*Lulu, Petey, Meg—are the second, or outer action of The Birthday Party. They are the ‘home folks’ who stand by and watch Stanley undergo his torment.*”²⁸¹ Even though Goldberg and McCann are the tormentors—in the strictest sense of the word—of Stanley, the way that Pinter portrays these play characters is intriguing owing to the fact that one can feel the presence of the aesthetic influence of American gangster films in *The Birthday Party*. As D. Keith Peacock notes, “*the gangster-film duo, which Pinter obviously drew from his favourite films of the 1940s and 1950s, normally consisted of a shrewd organizer and a less intelligent but violent part. In the cross-talk act, the complementary relationship is of a straight man and a stooge, who undertake verbal and, to a lesser extent, physical sparring.*”²⁸² The information that Peacock provides is important in the sense that it hints at the dependence of Goldberg and McCann to each other. This dependence to each other, moreover, can be deemed as one of the significant aspects of the dramaturgy of the play since the absence of Goldberg, or vice versa, are one of the few vulnerable moments of the duo throughout the play. After all, “McCann is the iron fist inside Goldberg’s velvet glove.”²⁸³ In the “inner action” of *The Birthday Party*, Stanley, a dominant and a potent character himself, remains alone with McCann at the beginning of the

²⁷⁹ D. Keith Peacock, **Harold Pinter and the New British Theatre**, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997, p. 63

²⁸⁰ Richard Schechner, “Puzzling Pinter”, in **The Tulane Drama Review** vol. 11, no. 2, 1966, p. 177

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 178

²⁸² D. Keith Peacock, **Harold Pinter and the New British Theatre**, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997, p. 65

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 66

second act for a quite deal of time,²⁸⁴ and later on in the same act with Goldberg for a brief moment,²⁸⁵ while McCann was away to fetch the drinks for the party. Then again, in both of the instances, Stanley *chooses* to stay, instead of running away, or showing physical violence, where he could easily have done so. This, of course, is a matter of choice for Stanley makes “*a series of on-stage choices which determine the direction of the action as he tries to discover the identity of the intruders and their reason for coming.*”²⁸⁶ In both cases, Stanley’s choice of staying either with Goldberg or McCann²⁸⁷ leads him to his downfall. Nevertheless, Stanley’s so-called crime is never *revealed* in the course of the play.

Similarly, the reason why Goldberg and McCann are out there in the boarding house under no circumstances is *disclosed* in the play. Martin Esslin, for one, comes up with several questions vis-à-vis the presence of Goldberg and McCann: “*Are they the emissaries of some secret organization he has betrayed? Or male nurses sent out to fetch him back to an asylum he has escaped from?*”²⁸⁸ Questions do keep popping up in the mind; but they are, as Esslin affirms, “*never answered.*”²⁸⁹ True, from the moment they appear out of the blue on the stage, Goldberg and McCann ceaselessly allude to an “assignment”, a “task”, a “mission”, as well as a “job”. McCann, the impatient of the comic duo, wants to learn the nature of the “job” desperately: “*This job—no, listen—this job, is it going to be like anything we’ve ever done before?*”²⁹⁰ Goldberg’s oft-quoted answer comes in a rather frosty fashion: “*The main issue is a singular issue and quite distinct from your previous work. Certain elements, however, might well approximate in points of procedure to some of your other activities. All is dependent on the attitude of our subject. At all events, McCann, I can assure you that the assignment will be carried out and the mission accomplished with no excessive aggravation to you or myself. Satisfied?*”²⁹¹

To a certain extent, the significance of Goldberg’s explanation, arguably, lies in the language that he deploys. The answer, which is rife with “*the evasive Latinisms of the law*”,²⁹² as well as with “*bureaucratic terminology*”,²⁹³ shows the brutal face of the comic

²⁸⁴ Harold Pinter, **The Birthday Party**, London: Faber and Faber, [1959] 1991, pp. 37-42

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45

²⁸⁶ Penelope Prentice, **The Pinter Ethic**, London and New York: Garland Publishing, 2000, p. 26

²⁸⁷ It is worth bearing in mind that Stanley also *chooses* to sit afterwards, without being subjected to physical violence.

²⁸⁸ Martin Esslin, **The Theatre of the Absurd**, New York: Vintage, [1961] 2001, p. 240

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ Harold Pinter, **The Birthday Party**, London: Faber and Faber, [1959] 1991, p. 29

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30

²⁹² Ruby Cohn, **Anglo-American Interplay in Recent Drama**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 73

duo. Hence, the menace about to come. Nevertheless, in the very early moments when they arrive at the boarding house, Goldberg makes no mention of a “job”, or whatsoever and soothes McCann, of whose mind is busy with why the hell they are there: “Relax. What’s the matter with you? I bring you down for a few days to the seaside. Take a holiday. Do yourself a favour. Learn to relax McCann, or you’ll never get anywhere.”²⁹⁴ The reason for their presence, therefore, suspends in the air for the entire course of the play: a job or a vacation on the seashore?

The answer to this and the various questions that can be derived from this issue is by no means exposed. Still, the brutal face of the comic duo reveals itself in the well-known interrogation scene of *The Birthday Party*. An excerpt from the initial phases of the “*weird surrealist cross-examination*”²⁹⁵ is worth quoting at length:

GOLDBERG. When did you come to this place?

STANLEY. Last year.

GOLDBERG. Where did you come from?

STANLEY. Somewhere else.

GOLDBERG. Why did you come here?

STANLEY. My feet hurt!

GOLDBERG. Why did you stay?

STANLEY. I had a headache!

GOLDBERG. Did you take anything for it?

STANLEY. Yes.

GOLDBERG. What?

STANLEY. Fruit salts!

GOLDBERG. Enos or Andrews?

STANLEY. En—An—

GOLDBERG. Did you stir properly? Did they fizz?

²⁹³ Jeannette R. Malkin, *Verbal Violence in Contemporary Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 54

²⁹⁴ Harold Pinter, *The Birthday Party*, London: Faber and Faber, [1959] 1991, p. 27

²⁹⁵ Martin Esslin, *The Peopled Wound: The Plays of Harold Pinter*, London: Methuen, 1970, p. 78

STANLEY. Now, now, wait, you—

GOLDBERG. Did they fizz? Did they fizz or didn't they fizz?

MCCANN. He doesn't know!

GOLDBERG. You don't know. When did you last have a bath?

STANLEY. I have one every—

GOLDBERG. Don't lie.

MCCANN. You betrayed the organization. I know him!

STANLEY. You don't!

GOLDBERG. What can you see without your glasses?

STANLEY. Anything.

GOLDBERG. Take off his glasses.²⁹⁶

A close glance at the excerpt indicates that Goldberg is the one who steers the interrogation. And McCann intervenes merely in the parts that can reinforce the effect of the verbal violence that they perpetrate upon Stanley. It is also significant to point out that there exists not a single sign of physical violence in the (verbal) actions of Goldberg and McCann. Consequently, “the iron fist inside Goldberg’s velvet glove” takes off Stanley’s glasses. This is the first sign of Stanley’s loss of strength. This cross-examination continues for three pages. Nonetheless, in the second part of the interrogation scene Goldberg and McCann verbally brutalise Stanley to such an extent that he finally screams. He is almost stripped off his language. But the verbal torture does not seem to cease at all:

MCCANN. Who are you, Webber?

GOLDBERG. What makes you think you exist?

MCCANN. You're dead.

GOLDBERG. You're dead. You can't live, you can't think. You can't love. You're dead. You're a plague gone bad. There's no juice in you. You're nothing but an odour!

Silence. They stand over him. He is crouched in the chair. He looks up slowly and kicks GOLDBERG in the stomach. GOLDBERG falls. STANLEY

²⁹⁶ Harold Pinter, **The Birthday Party**, London: Faber and Faber, [1959] 1991, pp. 48-49

stands. MCCANN seizes a chair and lifts it above his head. STANLEY seizes a chair and covers his head with it. MCCANN and STANLEY circle.

GOLDBERG. Steady, McCann.

STANLEY (*circling*). Uuuuuuhhhh!

MCCANN. Right, Judas.

GOLDBERG (*rising*). Steady, McCann.

MCCANN. Come on!

STANLEY. Uuuuuuhhhh!

MCCANN. He's sweating.

STANLEY. Uuuuhhhh!

GOLDBERG. Easy, McCann.

MCCANN. The bastard sweatpig is sweating.²⁹⁷

Observe how Goldberg controls McCann by impeding him from committing physical violence on Stanley. And also notice how the primary sign of physical violence comes from Stanley as a consequence of his will to defend himself. Actually, physical violence is the only thing that remains in Stanley's possession against Goldberg and McCann, who "*carry no weapon other than language.*"²⁹⁸ And he does not refrain from showing it whenever he finds the chance. The opportunity comes to Stanley in the middle of the blind man's buff played in the birthday party by means of a stage effect: the black out. Stanley first tries to choke Meg, and then attempts to rape Lulu. In her comprehensive study on violence in contemporary theatre, Jeannette R. Malkin, by directing attention to the birthday party itself, argues on solid grounds that "*this violent action merges the 'outer' and 'inner' levels of the play both in terms of plot and of metaphor, and marks Stanley's complete rupture from the family into the control of Goldberg and McCann. Thus, the birthday party serves as a controlling image which integrates the two divergent levels of action.*"²⁹⁹ At this point of analysis, one might as well highlight the fact that the verbal violence of Goldberg and McCann strips Stanley off his language in the literal sense of the word since after asking for his glasses at the beginning of

²⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 52-53

²⁹⁸ Jeannette R. Malkin, **Verbal Violence in Contemporary Drama**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 69

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 68

the birthday party³⁰⁰ he would not be able to speak properly again. After having bombarded Stanley with the language of their “prospect” in the third act, Goldberg asks him: “What’s your opinion of such a prospect? Eh, Stanley? STANLEY *concentrates, his mouth opens, he attempts to speak, fail and emits sounds from his throat.* STANLEY. Uh-gug...uh-gug...eeehhh-gag...(On the breath.) Caahh...caahh...”³⁰¹ Stanley is ordered to talk again. He tries twice. But all he can do is to voice this *baby talk*. The day, then, is indeed the birthday of Stanley. Complementary to these dramaturgical traits is the crucial part that “pauses and silences” attain during the course of the play. It is worth appealing here to the observation of one of the most renowned directors of Pinter’s plays, namely, Peter Hall. In his insightful article on directing the works of the playwright, Hall not only underscores the role of pauses in staging, but also lays particular emphasis on pauses by distinguishing them into three types. Hall’s observation requires to be quoted as a whole:

*Three Dots is a sign of a pressure point, a search for a word, a momentary incoherence. A Pause is a longer interruption to the action, where the lack of speech becomes a form of speech itself. The Pause is a threat, a moment of non-verbal tension. A Silence – the third category – is longer still. It is an extreme crisis point. Often the character emerges from the Silence with his attitude completely changed. As members of the audience, we should **feel** what happens in a Pause; but we can and should be frequently surprised by the change in a character as he emerges from a Silence. The change in him is often unexpected and highly dramatic.*³⁰²

A close reading of the play from the vantage point provided by Hall demonstrates that the case of *The Birthday Party* is by no means an exception. In the first act, the *seemingly* innocent pianist, Stanley, who has played all around the world and has *even* given a concert once, tells Meg in an “airily” tone how he has been proposed a new job: “I’ve. . . er. . . I’ve been offered a job, as a matter of fact.”³⁰³ Stanley shows off at first blush, but the presence of the three dots in his line is indicative of his restlessness. In addition to that, by bearing in mind the three dots in Stanley’s *baby talk*, one might as well argue that these punctuation marks can also imply a permanent incoherence in Pinter plays. The role of the three dots in Stanley’s *baby talk* becomes important all the more simply because they denote the highest

³⁰⁰ Cf. Harold Pinter, **The Birthday Party**, London: Faber and Faber, [1959] 1991, p. 53

³⁰¹ Ibid. p. 84

³⁰² Peter Hall, “Directing the Plays of Harold Pinter”, in Peter Raby (ed.) **The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [2001] 2009, p. 163, emphasis in the original.

³⁰³ Harold Pinter, **The Birthday Party**, London: Faber and Faber, [1959] 1991, p. 22

point of pressure that can be applied to Stanley in *The Birthday Party*. Next: A Pause. Remember, again in the first act—in the “outer” action of the play—the exchange between Meg and Stanley: “I’ve got to get things for two gentlemen. *A Pause*. STANLEY *slowly raises his head. He speaks without turning*. STANLEY. What two gentlemen? MEG. I’m expecting visitors. *He turns*. STANLEY. What?”³⁰⁴ As “a moment of non-verbal tension”, the Pause here, being totally different from the three dots, signify a significant external threat for Stanley. The external threat, therefore, enters the play through a Pause and remains there until the final curtain. Third: Silence. It is surely an ultimate crisis point. In this particular respect, one’s mind harks back to the previously quoted excerpt that pertains to the end of the interrogation scene. The function of Silence in the stage directions in the quote is crystal clear. Stanley emerges from the Silence with an entirely hostile attitude towards his (verbal) tormentors. He shows physical violence as a result of his need to defend himself. This action, as was pointed out with a special reference to Malkin, would culminate with throttling Meg, and an attempt to rape Lulu.

In many respects, *The Birthday Party* can be regarded as the milestone of Pinter’s career as a playwright. Commenting upon the early plays of the author, Zehra İpşiroğlu pins down that “*in Pinter’s world, people are under the threat of invisible, dark, and secret powers. They live in jittery and are constantly on the run.*”³⁰⁵ To this remark, one would like to add that such dramaturgical traits as, “ambiguity”, “verbal violence”, and the “pauses and silences” that have been analysed so far can be deemed as immanent to the theatre of Pinter. Since the repercussions of these features can highly be felt in Pinter’s plays, such as *The Homecoming* (1964), *The Betrayal* (1978), *One for the Road* (1984), *Mountain Language* (1988), and so on.

To recapitulate, being “*structured superficially like the familiar, realistic well-made play, with its exposition, complication, climax and denouement,*”³⁰⁶ *The Birthday Party* challenges the theatrical habits of the receptors through the dramaturgical traits that have been dwelled upon in this section. Yet, the challenge that Pinter poses on theatregoers does not merely aim to baffle them. On the contrary, through the challenge it becomes possible for the audience to take into consideration in relation to the dynamics of the era that they live in. *The Birthday Party* together with its Kafkaesque allusions to the sinister, clandestine, unfathomable mental and verbal torture has very much to tell to contemporary spectators.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 19-20

³⁰⁵ Zehra İpşiroğlu, *Uyumsuz Tiyatroda Gerçekçilik*, İstanbul: Mitos Boyut, [1978] 1996, p. 39

³⁰⁶ D. Keith Peacock, *Harold Pinter and the New British Theatre*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997, p. 64

After all, Goldberg and McCann's "power to destroy and recreate Stanley is, in a sense, a concrete demonstration of the power which language exercises on us all."³⁰⁷

Memet Fuat's *Doğumgünü Partisi*

It would not be an overstatement to think that the place of translation criticism within the realm of Translation Studies is somewhat problematic. Ever since James Holmes introduced his famous schematic map regarding the discipline in the early 1970s,³⁰⁸ and Gideon Toury discussed it in detail in the 1980s and 1990s respectively,³⁰⁹ the tendency has been to keep translation criticism apart from the descriptive translation studies. This has its reasons. In the words of Theo Hermans, "the study of translation generally had to emancipate itself from its ancillary status with respect to translation criticism and translator training so as to be able to approach translation as a phenomenon worthy of attention in its own right."³¹⁰ One can easily understand Hermans' concerns as regards to the prescriptivism intrinsic to translation criticism; a critical act per se, which one way or another entails value judgments. Nevertheless, when one sets such concerns apart and draws on description in translation criticism, it becomes possible to develop an approach that can avoid prescriptivism as much as possible. This framework can be termed as "descriptive theatre (translation) criticism."³¹¹ Within this theoretical framework, moreover, one can, arguably, tackle other scholarly works produced on translation criticism, albeit with a critical eye.

That of Antoine Berman,³¹² for example: his perceptive approach to the study and practice of translation criticism attracts one to take a closer look at his methodology. There are points worth noting at the outset though. In the first place, Berman deals with poetry translation criticism in his book; to be more precise, the French and Spanish translation/s of John Donne's "Going to Bed". Despite the fact that Berman does not buckle down theatre-

³⁰⁷ Jeannette R. Malkin, **Verbal Violence in Contemporary Drama**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 69

³⁰⁸ James Holmes, "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies" [1972], in **Translated!: Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies**, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988, pp. 67-80

³⁰⁹ Gideon Toury, "A Rationale for Descriptive Translation Studies", in Theo Hermans (ed.) **The Manipulation of Literature**, London & Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985, pp. 34-37; Gideon Toury, **Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond**, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995, pp. 17-19

³¹⁰ Theo Hermans, "Literary Translation", in Piotr Kuhiwczak and Karin Littaru (Eds.) **A Companion to Translation Studies**, Clevedon: Multilingual, 2007, p. 81

³¹¹ Burç İdem Dinçel, **A Critical Study of the Turkish Translations of Samuel Beckett's *Krapps's Last Tape* and Its Interpretations within the Turkish Theatrical System**, unpublished MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2010, p. 8

³¹² Antoine Berman, **Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne**, trans. and ed. Françoise Massardier-Kenney, Kent: Kent State University Press, 2009

translation criticism specifically in his study, the *methodology* he proposes invites consideration. In the second place, Berman is not an easy mark to integrate into the descriptive theoretical framework. Before proposing his methodology, he casts a sharp critical eye to the descriptive paradigm. And he does so, on firm grounds. Questioning the validity of the futile search for objectivity in the descriptive approaches of Toury and Annie Brisset within the context of translation criticism, Berman directs attention to two results: “*First, the translated text is **objectified**, transformed into an object of knowledge; it is no longer something one questions in order to criticize or praise. Secondly, the translation is in all cases **justified** since the analysis itself shows that it could not be other than what it was.*”³¹³ Berman’s argument has a strong point that is directly related to the legitimate claims of Translation Studies vis-à-vis scientificity. “‘*Science of translation*’”, continues Berman, “*can mean a rigorous discursive and conceptual knowledge of translation and translations, which attempts to achieve its own scientificity. But it can also mean endeavouring to constitute a positivist and pseudo-scientific knowledge of translation, borrowing slavishly and uncritically from the procedures of the ‘exact’ sciences.*”³¹⁴ A note on objectivity, that is reminiscent of Füsün Akatlı’s remark which has been cited earlier in the introductory part of this paper.

Now, prior to an engagement with Berman’s methodology, an integrative response to the arguments he sets forth. At first glance, one can hardly disagree with the points that Berman raises against the objectification of translation and the justification of descriptive analysis by the analyst. Still, description—precisely speaking, the significance attributed to the notion of description in this article—stands for offering a vantage point through which one can either conjointly care to take a look, or provoked to call into question the viewpoint provided by the critic. In this sense, yes, description objectifies and justifies. But objectifies and justifies the analysis *simply* for the purpose of triggering further discussions as regards to the work of art in question, *definitely not* with an aim to shut the doors of interpretation by perpetuating the artwork within the limits of the vantage point offered. It is precisely a matter of establishing a distance, a “*focal distance in a way which we too can measure, whose angles of incidence we can calibrate.*”³¹⁵ It is, moreover, feasible to undertake the critical act by dint of description. As Noël Carroll maintains, “*perhaps the most important service that description performs is to segregate out for attention the parts and relations of the work that the critical analysis or interpretation goes on most often typically to demonstrate as*

³¹³ Ibid., pp. 47-48, emphasis in the original.

³¹⁴ Ibid., p. 48

³¹⁵ George Steiner, “‘Critic’/‘Reader’”, in *New Literary History* 10: 3, p. 425

belonging to a functionally organized whole worthy of evaluative commendation for its artistic achievement of unity."³¹⁶ Within this context, it can also be argued that description can acquire a crucial role that in translation criticism, and, by extension, in theatre (translation) criticism.

In spite of his harsh criticisms of the descriptive paradigm, however, Berman himself does not deny "its great positive contribution."³¹⁷ Berman's methodology basically operates on two levels: while the first plane includes, "*a first analysis based both on the reading of translation(s), which provides an X-ray of the project, and on everything the translator may have said in various texts (preface afterwords, articles, and interviews, about translation or not, for everything here is a clue), when they exist,*"³¹⁸ the second stage involves "*the comparative work itself, which is by definition an analysis of the translation, of the original and of the modes of implementations of the project.*"³¹⁹ The fact that Berman does not stop at the level of comparative analysis, and includes in his methodology the (other) modes of implementations, as well as the "*immediate reception of translation*"³²⁰ thereof is the merit of his approach. Berman's stress on embarking on the analysis with the (re)readings of the target text (hereafter TT) is also important. It is only *after* the (re)reading of the translation that source text (hereafter ST) comes into play.

As was stated previously, Berman is concerned with poetry translation criticism in his book. Although the methodology that he proposes mainly applies to that specific genre, the "analytical path" through which he walks in his interpretative journey appears to be relevant for the translation criticism of literary and theatrical works as well. Berman's "analytical path" calls for consideration from the perspective of theatre (translation) criticism though. Berman persists on the significance of the "impressions" that the critic can get from the (re)reading/s of translation/s: "*to let oneself be overcome, shaped, by these impressions is to give a solid ground to the criticism to come.*"³²¹ Then again, one cannot help but thinking of Zehra İpşiroğlu's caveat about "impressions" at this juncture: "*If the critic is describing merely his or her initial impressions regarding the piece in criticism, then the criticism stands for an expression of the critic's own feelings rather than a gloss on the work that s/he*

³¹⁶ Noël Carroll, **On Criticism**, London and New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 92-93

³¹⁷ Antoine Berman, **Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne**, trans. and ed. Françoise Massardier-Kenney, Kent: Kent State University Press, 2009, p. 47

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6, pp. 201-225

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51

criticises.”³²² The point is decisive, and it causes one to raise concerns about the importance of “impressions” in Berman’s approach.

Yet, there is nothing nefarious about it. These concerns can be eased by harking back to a model for the analysis of the performances of plays in translation.³²³ It is important to note that the model purports to shift the focus in theatre (translation) criticism from “page” to “stage”. For that very reason, it does not stop on the level of comparative textual analysis. It takes the analysis one step further in order to monitor the act/s of *translation* undertaken by the agents, one of the most significant of them being the director, involved in the production of the piece under discussion. As regards to the textual analysis, the model too takes the TT as the point of departure, albeit with one major difference than Berman’s methodology; a difference, more or less, aims to avoid falling into the trap which İpşiroğlu has drawn attention to. Therefore, the TT is analysed *after* the *dramaturgical* analysis of the piece under observation. Needless to say, the dramaturgical analysis in this phase of the model has no *linguistic* concerns at all. The dramaturgical analysis is simply aimed to pinpoint “*the features of the given play that have particular relevance to performance,*”³²⁴ as was done in the previous section on the dramaturgical traits of Harold Pinter’s *The Birthday Party*. Later on, the second step of the model, that is to say, the comparative analysis of the TT with the ST in view of the dramaturgical analysis of the play. And last but not least the staging of the TT; an act, which in certain respects goes very much hand in hand with the act of translation. Hence the *translation* of the *translation* through the director’s interpretation of the TT on stage in the production.

This last point comes into prominence even more when one thinks of Berman’s notion of “immediate reception”, or in his own words, “*the immediate criticism, the reviews that followed the translation when it first appeared and that have partially shaped its image for the readers. For every important translation (or for the translation of an important work), this immediate criticism is gathered in the book review files of the publishers.*”³²⁵ In this sense, the Turkish translation of Pinter’s *The Birthday Party* and its production thereof, serve as an intriguing example. The play was translated into Turkish as *Doğumgünü Partisi* by Memet Fuat (1926-2002). And the Turkish translation of the piece was published by De

³²² Zehra İpşiroğlu, **Eleştirinin Eleştirisi**, İstanbul: Mitos Boyut, [1992] 1998, p. 26

³²³ Burç İdem Dinçel, **A Critical Study of the Turkish Translations of Samuel Beckett’s Krapps’s Last Tape and Its Interpretations within the Turkish Theatrical System**, unpublished MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2010, pp. 100-104

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101

³²⁵ Antoine Berman, **Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne**, trans. and ed. Françoise Massardier-Kenney, Kent: Kent State University Press, 2009, p. 6

Yayınevi in 1965.³²⁶ But Fuat was not only a translator. As the founder of De Yayınevi, he was at the same a publisher. In addition to these, he was an important critic as well. As Tahsin Yücel puts it, “with his pure language, with his sharp and compassionate views, with his cultural and literary background Memet Fuat will seem to preserve his respectable position amongst our critics.”³²⁷ In the light of Yücel’s appraisal, one can deem Fuat as one of the most vigorous figures of the Turkish literary circles. This holds true especially for the 1960s. Indeed, Fuat’s role as a publisher in the 1960s was quite influential owing not only to the numerous translations published by De Yayınevi, but also due to the publication of *Yeni Dergi*; a journal, which in the words of Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar, “has left its mark on the intellectual life of the 1960s.”³²⁸ Notwithstanding with t/his intellectual output, as well as his status as a literary translator and critic, Fuat’s Turkish translation of Pinter’s *The Birthday Party* has received almost no attention. The curious fact that it is impossible for one to find reviews of *Doğumgünü Partisi* in the sense that Berman uses the word fortifies the credibility of this point all the more.

The irony deepens to a greater extent when one takes into consideration the absence of translation criticism regarding Fuat’s *Doğumgünü Partisi* even after the City Theatre of Istanbul Municipality production of the play directed by Yıldırım Şahinler. This issue, of course, is related to the infamous tendency of theatre criticism to “bypass the significance of the act of translation and translators”³²⁹ in the course of productions. Even so, this recent production has received considerable amount of notice within the Turkish theatrical circles. To a certain degree, this uneven treatment of Fuat’s *Doğumgünü Partisi* is contingent upon the nature of translated theatre texts. Excluding closet dramas like *Samson Agonistes* of John Milton, some plays of Lord Byron, and so on, which were not intended for performance in the first place, (translated) theatre texts are blueprints for productions. They come into existence through the respective translation/s of the agents involved in the production. In other words: performance is complementary to the initial act of theatre translation. As a matter of fact, the recent production of *Doğum Günü Partisi* managed to draw the interest of the public. Within this context, Berman’s concept of “immediate reception” becomes more of an issue to be taken into account while casting a critical glance at Şahinler’s *Doğum Günü Partisi*. For that

³²⁶ Memet Fuat (Trans.), *Doğumgünü Partisi* by Harold Pinter, Istanbul: De Yayınevi

³²⁷ Tahsin Yücel, *Eleştiri Kuramları*, Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, [2007] 2009, p. 71

³²⁸ Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar, *Kapılar*, Istanbul: Scala Yayıncılık, 2005, p. 100

³²⁹ Burç İdem Dinçel, *A Critical Study of the Turkish Translations of Samuel Beckett’s Krapps’s Last Tape and Its Interpretations within the Turkish Theatrical System*, unpublished MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2010, p. 9

very reason, the situation compels one to tackle the production particularly from the vantage point of its reception.

But prior to an “*encounter*”³³⁰ with the City Theatre of Istanbul Municipality production of the piece, a “*confrontation*”³³¹ with Fuat’s *Doğumgünü Partisi* is necessary. “*What is selected*”, pens Berman, “*are those of the original that are, so to speak, the places where the work condenses, represents, signifies, or symbolizes itself. These passages are signifying zones where a literary work reaches its own purpose (not necessarily that of the author) and its own center of gravity.*”³³² Depending upon the previous analysis of the play, Fuat’s *Doğumgünü Partisi* will now be examined from the perspective of the dramaturgical traits that have been discussed in detail earlier, namely, ambiguity”, “verbal violence”, and the “pauses and silences”. Furthermore, the extracts that will be tackled here pertain to the action just before the interrogation scene, the initial stages of the interrogation scene itself, as well as the aftermaths of the interrogation scene in the third act respectively. It goes without saying that the selection of the excerpts derive from the preceding dramaturgical analysis of the play, certainly not from the impressions that (re)reading/s of Fuat’s *Doğumgünü Partisi* made.

GOLDBERG. **Oturun.**

STANLEY. Niye oturacaktım?

GOLDBERG. Doğrusunu **istersen**, Webber, canımı sıkmaya başlıyorsun yavaş yavaş.

STANLEY. Öyle mi? Eh, öyleyse —

GOLDBERG. Otur diyorum.

STANLEY. Hayır.

GOLDBERG *içini çeker, masanın başına oturur, sağa.*

GOLDBERG. McCann.

MCCANN. Nat?

GOLDBERG. Söyle otursun.

MCCANN. Peki, Nat. (*STANLEY’e doğru gider.*) **Oturmaz mısınız?**

³³⁰ Jerzy Grotowski, **Towards a Poor Theatre**, Eugenio Barba (ed.), trans. Richard Schechner (et al.) London: Methuen, 1975

³³¹ Antoine Berman, **Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne**, trans. and ed. Françoise Massardier-Kenney, Kent: Kent State University Press, 2009, p. 68

³³² *Ibid.*, p. 54

STANLEY. Hayır, oturmam.

MCCANN. **Hayır, ama — otursanız daha iyi olacak.**

STANLEY. **Sen niye oturmuyorsun?**

MCCANN. **Ben değil — sen oturacaksın.**

STANLEY. Oturmuyorum.

Sessizlik.

MCCANN. **Nat.**

GOLDBERG. **Ne?**

MCCANN. Oturmuyor.

GOLDBERG. Söyle de otursun.

MCCANN. Söyledim.

GOLDBERG. Bir daha söyle.

MCCANN. (*STANLEY'e.*) **Oturun.**

STANLEY. Niye?

MCCANN. Daha rahat **edersiniz.**

STANLEY. **Sen** de öyle.

Sessizlik.

MCCANN. Peki. **Siz** otursanız ben de oturacağım.

STANLEY. Önce **sen.**

MCCANN yavaşça oturur masanın başına, sola.

MCCANN. Haydi.

STANLEY. İyi. Şimdi ikiniz de dinlendiniz işte, artık gidebilirsiniz!

MCCANN. (*Kalkarak.*) Çirkeflik ediyor! Sereceğim yere leşini!

GOLDBERG. (*Kalkarak.*) Yok! Ben de kalkarım ayağa olur.

MCCANN. Otur, Nat!

GOLDBERG. Bir kere kalktım mı oturmam artık.

STANLEY. Ben de öyle.

MCCANN. (*STANLEY'e yaklaşıarak.*) Mr Goldberg'i ayağa **kaldırdın.**

STANLEY. (*Sesini yükselterek.*) İyi gelir ayakta durmak!

MCCANN. Otur şuraya!

GOLDBERG. (*STANLEY'e doğru giderek.*) Webber. (*Sessizce.*) OTUR. (*Sessizlik.*

STANLEY <<TheMountains of Morne>> şarkısını ıslıkla söylemeye başlar. Masanın yanındaki sandalyeye doğru salınarak gider. Ötekiler ona bakarlar. Islık kesilir. Sessizlik. STANLEY oturur.)³³³

The passage taken from Fuat's translation belongs to the action preceding the interrogation scene. The excerpt depicts Stanley's aggressive behaviour towards his would-be tormentors, Goldberg and McCann. Through a close reading of Fuat's translation, it becomes possible for one to acquire glimpses of the "comedy of menace" immanent to the play. Fuat's treatment of McCann's lines is worthy of notice. McCann's shoddy shows of politeness while trying to make Stanley sit down produces the comic effect. Fuat is careful enough to unmask the menace by changing McCann's line to the second person when Stanley opposes him first. Just for an instant though; because McCann keeps on talking in the plural person, until Stanley puts one over Goldberg and McCann by making both of them sit down. It is only after Stanley's ruse that McCann turns entirely towards him. Fuat seems to treat Goldberg's lines differently. Immediately after Stanley's first opposition, Goldberg's lines change from the second person to first person, and remain so until the end. After all, Goldberg is the one who pulls McCann's strings and thanks to this translational strategy, the menace and comedy cooperate in Fuat's text. The alliteration that Fuat creates (Nat/Ne?) between the lines of Goldberg and McCann exemplifies this aspect. In addition to these, one spots two identical "pauses", both of which indicate the same action of tension. At this point, returning to Pinter's text might drop more hints with respect to Fuat's translation:

GOLDBERG. **Sit down.**

STANLEY. Why should I?

GOLDBERG. If **you** want to know the truth, Webber, you're beginning to get on my breasts.

³³³ Memet Fuat (Trans.), **Doğumgünü Partisi** by Harold Pinter, Istanbul: De Yayınevi, pp. 46-47, emphasis added.

STANLEY. Really? Well, that's—

GOLDBERG. Sit down.

STANLEY. No.

GOLDBERG *sighs, and sits at the table right.*

GOLDBERG. McCann.

MCCANN. Nat?

GOLDBERG. Ask him to sit down.

MCCANN. Yes, Nat. (*MCCANN moves to STANLEY.*) **Do you mind sitting down?**

STANLEY. Yes, I do mind.

MCCANN. **Yes now, but—it'd be better if you do.**

STANLEY. **Why don't you sit down?**

MCCANN. **No, not me—you.**

STANLEY. No thanks.

Pause.

MCCANN. **Nat.**

GOLDBERG. **What?**

MCCANN. He won't sit down.

GOLDBERG. Well, ask him.

MCCANN. I've asked him.

GOLDBERG. Ask him again.

MCCANN. (*to STANLEY.*) **Sit down.**

STANLEY. Why?

MCCANN. **You'd** be more comfortable.

STANLEY. So would you.

Pause.

MCCANN. All right. If you will I will.

STANLEY. **You** first.

MCCANN slowly sits at the table, left.

MCCANN. Well?

STANLEY. Right. Now you've both had a rest you can get out!

MCCANN. (*Rising.*) That's a dirty trick! I'll kick the shite out of him!

GOLDBERG. (*Rising.*) No! I have stood up.

MCCANN. Sit down again!

GOLDBERG. Once I'm up I'm up.

STANLEY. Same here.

MCCANN. (*Moving to STANLEY.*) **You've** made Mr Goldberg stand up.

STANLEY. (*His voice rising.*) It'll do him good!

MCCANN. Get in that seat.

GOLDBERG. (*Crossing to him.*) Webber. (*Quietly.*) SIT DOWN. (*Silence.* STANLEY

*begins to whistle "The Mountains of Morne". He strolls causally to the chair at the table. They watch him. He stops whistling. Silence. He sits.)*³³⁴

When Fuat's translation is (re)read again in view of Pinter's text, it becomes possible to deduce that it resonates with the "comedy of menace" of *The Birthday Party*. Pinter achieves the comic effect through the conflict emerging from Stanley's resistance to sit, McCann fake show of courtesy for urging him to sit down, as well as Goldberg's control of the action right from the beginning of the excerpt. The comic element comes mainly from McCann. As the "iron fist inside Goldberg's velvet glove" he is, so to speak, a powder keg, ready to explode. But he cannot. On the contrary: he is bound to show politeness to Stanley, albeit just for a brief moment. Then again, on being fooled by Stanley, he can no longer be controlled. Goldberg steps precisely in this point. And makes Stanley sit down without implementing physical violence. Just by means of showing his brutal face which Goldberg has already displayed by telling his victim how Stanley has got his dander up at the beginning of the quote. Even though one can hardly find a linguistic hint regarding this change of heart,

³³⁴ Harold Pinter, *The Birthday Party*, London: Faber and Faber, [1959] 1991, pp. 45-47, emphasis added.

the action of the play alludes to a crisis point that is about to come. In the TT, these aspects are consonant with that of Pinter. Still, the crisis point that Pinter constructs through his “pauses and silences” are completely different than Fuat’s translation. While in Pinter’s text “pause” interrupts the action by giving rise to a non-verbal tension, and “silence” signifies an immense crisis point by making Stanley to *choose* to sit down, in Fuat’s translation both of them indicate the same action due to the fact that he translates both of these crucial stage directions as “sessizlik”, thereby making this vital dramaturgical trait in the translation vanish into thin air. Rather than the alliteration of Nat/What?, which heightens the comic effect to a certain extent in Fuat’s text, it is these fundamental dramaturgical aspects, both of which have direct relevance to the performance of the piece that one would probably like to find out in the translation.

Right after this section is the initial stages of the interrogation scene:

STANLEY. **Hareketlerinize azıcık dikkat etseniz iyi olur.**

GOLDBERG. **Dün ne yaptın, Webber?**

STANLEY. Dün mü?

GOLDBERG. **Dünden önceki gün. Sonra daha önceki gün ne yaptın Webber?**

STANLEY. Ne demek istiyorsun?

GOLDBERG. Niye herkesin zamanını boşa harcıyorsun, Webber? Niye herkesin yolu üstüne çıkıyorsun?

STANLEY. Ben mi? Ne demek is —

GOLDBERG. Sana söylüyorum bak, Webber. Sen yıkılmış, bitmiş bir insansın. **Ne diye herkesin ışığını karartıyorsun? Ne diye o ihtiyar kadını çılgına çeviriyorsun?**

MCCANN. Hoşuna gidiyor yaptıkları!

GOLDBERG. Niye bu kadar kötü hareket ediyorsun, Webber? Niye o ihtiyar adamı satranç oynamıya gönderiyorsun?

STANLEY. Ben mi?

GOLDBERG. Niye o kıza sanki cüzamlıymış gibi davranıyorsun? **Cüzzamlı [sic.] değil o, Webber!**

STANLEY. Yani ne —

GOLDBERG. Geçen hafta ne giydin, Webber? Nerede duruyor elbiselerin?

MCCANN. Niye ayrıldın teşkilâttan?

GOLDBERG. **Annen ne diyecek buna, Webber?**

MCCANN. Niye ele verdin bizi?

GOLDBERG. Beni üzüyorsun, canımı yakıyorsun, Webber. Çok çirkef bir oyun oynuyorsun.

MCCANN. **Gün gibi ortada.**

GOLDBERG. **Ne sanıyorsun kendini?**

MCCANN. **Ne sanıyorsun kendini?**

STANLEY. Yanılıyorsunuz.³³⁵

The excerpt opens with Stanley's line, probably his last "line" that he speaks *properly* before being *deprived* of his language, ability to speak, as well as his gift of the gab. For that very reason, the line is more than crucial. In Fuat's translation, Stanley warns Goldberg and McCann in advance; maybe not to take things too far, maybe not to be too harsh. He sounds as if he has already gotten down off his high horse. In spite of Stanley's warning, however, Goldberg turns the atmosphere into a whodunit by asking what he has done in recent days. And the verbal torture starts. Here too, the control is in the hands of Goldberg. Fuat's text depicts Stanley as a man being accused of outshining people, driving Meg crazy, telling Petey to go out to play chess, treating Lulu like a leprous, being unfilial, and so forth. In this passage, McCann comes into play in order to heighten the effect/s of the verbal torment by deepening the mystification of the situation. The allusion to the "organization", for instance, comes from McCann. And he outlaws Stanley. In the TT, moreover, Fuat's repetition of Goldberg and McCann's lines catches the eye since it makes the translation appear to be consonant with the tone of verbal violence of the interrogation scene. Sounding out Pinter at this juncture, can provide one with more information as regards to Fuat's translation:

STANLEY. **You'd better be careful.**

³³⁵ Memet Fuat (Trans.), **Doğumgünü Partisi** by Harold Pinter, Istanbul: De Yayınevi, pp. 47-48, emphasis added.

GOLDBERG. **Webber, what were you doing yesterday?**

STANLEY. Yesterday?

GOLDBERG. **And the day before. What did you do the day before that?**

STANLEY. What do you mean?

GOLDBERG. Why are you wasting everybody's time, Webber? Why are you getting in everybody's way?

STANLEY. Me? What are you—

GOLDBERG. I'm telling you, Webber. You're a washout. **Why are you getting on everybody's wick? Why are you driving that old lady off her conk?**

MCCANN. He likes to do it!

GOLDBERG. Why do you behave so badly, Webber? **Why do you force that old man out to play chess?**

STANLEY. Me?

GOLDBERG. Why do you treat that young lady like a leper? **She's not the leper, Webber!**

STANLEY. What the—

GOLDBERG. What did you wear last week, Webber? Where do you keep your suits?

MCCANN. Why did you leave the organization?

GOLDBERG. **What would your old mum say, Webber?**

MCCANN. Why did you betray us?

GOLDBERG. You hurt me, Webber. You're playing a dirty game.

MCCANN. **That's a Black and Tan fact.**

GOLDBERG. **Who does he think he is?**

MCCANN. **Who do you think you are?**

STANLEY. You're on the wrong horse.³³⁶

In the opening line of Pinter's text, on the other hand, Stanley is still on his high horse. As one could remember from the action preceding the beginning of the interrogation, he has *chosen* to sit down in a showy fashion. He does not sound as if he is warning his would-be tormentors to take it easy on him. Call it a rearguard action if you will; a verbal rearguard action telling Goldberg and McCann that Stanley is still alive and kicking. Even so, Goldberg does not hesitate at all to answer Stanley back by kicking off the verbal torture. Goldberg does *not* ask Stanley what he has done yesterday. Instead, he asks with what Stanley was *busy* with yesterday and the day before. It is only *after* posing these questions on him Goldberg asks Stanley what he has done the day before that. As was demonstrated in the preceding analysis of the play, Pinter's dramaturgical strategies, for the most part, operate on the level of ambiguity. As a matter of fact, his play characters too get their share/s of ambiguity. Here in this excerpt, the ambiguity of Goldberg's question serves to perplex Stanley on short notice. Pinter gradually increases the tone of verbal violence: rather than outshining people, Stanley is accused of making peoples' hackles rise; rather than driving Meg crazy, he is accused of pestering the *life* out of her; rather than telling Petey to go out to play chess, he is accused of *pushing* him *for* doing so. Goldberg presses further-*more*: he humiliates Stanley by calling him *the* leper, by disturbing him all the *more* with a minor, yet consequential reference to his *old* mum. As an Irishman McCann steps in just for the purpose of intensifying the torment by his hints at the Anglo-Irish conflict, with the connotations of IRA and the Black and Tans. Yet, for the final blow on Stanley, he joins his verbal forces with Goldberg. Goldberg humiliates Stanley even *more* by vilipending him through a change to third person in the language. McCann assures Stanley that he is *the* one who does not even deserve to be addressed. The verbal violence accompanied by ambiguity goes at full speed in Pinter's text, whereas in Fuat's translation it is stationary and bereft of ambiguity.

When all is *said* and *done* (in the *strictest* sense of the word), there comes a moment in the third act where Goldberg and McCann exchange these lines towards the end of the piece:

MCCANN. Bekliyor muyuz, yoksa gidip getiriyor muyuz?

GOLDBERG. (*Yavaşça.*) Sen istiyor musun gidip getirmek?

MCCANN. **Bitsin istiyorum artık bu iş.**

³³⁶ Harold Pinter, **The Birthday Party**, London: Faber and Faber, [1959] 1991, pp. 47-48, emphasis added.

GOLDBERG. Orası doğru.

MCCANN. Öyleyse bekliyor muyuz, yoksa — ?

GOLDBERG. (*Sözünü keserek.*) Nedense bir yorgunluk var üstümde. Şey gibi... Hiç böyle olmazdım.

MCCANN. Öyle mi?

GOLDBERG. Çok tuhaf.

MCCANN. (*Birden kalkıp GOLDBERG'in oturduğu sandalyenin arkasına gider. Islık gibi bir sesle.*) **Bitirip bu işi gidelim. Bitirip gidelim. Bitsin artık. Bitirelim bu uğursuz işi. Bitirelim de gidelim artık.**

*Sessizlik.*³³⁷

As can be inferred from the quote, the excerpt is concerned with the *raison d'être* of Goldberg and McCann's out there on the boarding house. The next day in the morning following Stanley's *bacchanalian* birthday party, Goldberg and McCann discuss their next step to take. As the anxious one of the duo, McCann, sounds out Goldberg (once again). After all, it is up to Goldberg to decide what to do next. In the TT, it is crystal clear that they came to the place for the execution of a "job", an "assignment", a "task", a "mission", or whatsoever. And there is nothing "wrong" with the translation, as the advocates of a linguistic-oriented approach to the study and practice of translation would (im)probably say. McCann exposes the nature of their existence thrice with a pause as a concluding dramaturgical remark. At this point of analysis, appealing to Pinter's text might come in handy:

MCCANN. Do we wait or do we go and get him?

GOLDBERG. (*slowly.*) You want to go and get him?

MCCANN. **I want to get it over.**

GOLDBERG. That's understandable.

MCCANN. Do we wait or do we go and get him?

GOLDBERG. (*interrupting.*) I don't know why, but I feel knocked out. I feel a bit...

It's uncommon for me.

³³⁷ Memet Fuat (Trans.), **Doğumgünü Partisi** by Harold Pinter, Istanbul: De Yayınevi, p. 76, emphasis added.

MCCANN. Is that so?

GOLDBERG. It's unusual.

MCCANN. (*rising swiftly and going behind GOLDBERG's chair. Hissing.*) **Let's**

**finish and go. Let's get it over and go. Get the thing done. Let's finish
the bloody thing. Let's get the thing done and go!**

*Pause.*³³⁸

When the TT and the ST set side by side, one can see how Pinter continues to keep the ambiguity suspended in the air. As was underscored in the previous section, the nature of Goldberg and McCann's existence on the summer house is never divulged. True though, the course of the play hints strongly at a "job". But Pinter is wary of not letting drop the issue in the vital moments of the piece. The words he deploys are simply "it" and the "thing". McCann does by no means say the "job". It is also worth mentioning the function of the last concluding dramaturgical note. Here, as in the entire course of the play, pauses signify moments of verbal tension. In *The Birthday Party*, there comes another pause immediately after this one, and then, McCann calls Goldberg "Simey"; a name which is adequate to burn Goldberg up. Two pauses increase the moment of non-verbal tension and consequently Goldberg "*seizes MCCANN by the throat.*"³³⁹ Then again, as can be deduced from this passage, as well as the previous excerpt, "pauses and silences" indicate identical actions in Fuat's translation.

On the whole, Fuat's *Doğumgünü Partisi* seems to echo the "comedy of menace" of Pinter's *The Birthday Party* to a considerable extent. Fuat's treatment of Goldberg and McCann's lines through his careful observation of the usages of second person and singular person can be taken as a token of this issue. Nonetheless, *depending upon* the previous dramaturgical analysis of the play, it can be argued that the tone of "verbal violence" in Fuat's *Doğumgünü Partisi* is rather stationary when his translation is (re)read in comparison with Pinter's *The Birthday Party*. While Pinter progressively increases the pitch of verbal violence, Fuat keeps a static tone in the interrogation scene. Parallel to this issue is the notion of "ambiguity". By opting for a translation which actually sounds pretty "fine", Fuat reveals the nature of Goldberg and McCann's existence out there on the boarding house, whereas Pinter sustains the ambiguity throughout his play. In addition to these aspects, there is also the issue

³³⁸ Harold Pinter, *The Birthday Party*, London: Faber and Faber, [1959] 1991, p. 76, emphasis added.

³³⁹ Ibid.

of “pauses and silences”, the dramaturgical features of the play both of which signify entirely different actions, moments, and tensions in the piece. As a consequence of Fuat’s rendering both of these stage directions as “sessizlik”, it becomes hard for one to find the traces of these dramaturgical traits in the translation. Perhaps, in order to leave the decision to the reader within the context of *descriptive* theatre-translation criticism, it would be better at this point to give the final say, to Fuat himself until the end of the section by taking into account his thoughts on theatre plays, translation criticism, as well as his “translating position”, or in the words of Berman, “*is the self-positioning of the translator vis-à-vis translation, a self-positioning that, once chosen (for it is in fact, a choice) binds the translator.*”³⁴⁰ Therefore, it is worth referring to Fuat’s words as regards to his translational approach in the earlier phases of his career: “*In my opinion, the most important thing is to render the flavour of the author. For that reason, I pay particular attention to the stylistic features. I don’t take the easy way out and separate and abridge the sentences. And what is more significant is the beauty of the language. The language must not be sacrificed no matter what happens.*”³⁴¹

As was mentioned earlier in this section, Fuat was also a critic himself. And he too has things to say on translation criticism. Commenting upon Fuat’s views on translation criticism with a reference to one of his articles about the issue,³⁴² Özlem Berk points out how the translation critic “*was engaged with two kinds of creativity: to grasp the meaning of the text and compare it with translation and, in addition, to keep in mind the translator’s understanding of translation and his/her aim*”³⁴³ according to Fuat. To this remark, one might as well take into consideration Fuat’s opinions with respect to the appraisal of theatre plays: “*It is difficult to evaluate a play that has not made an appearance on stage.*”³⁴⁴ Needless to say, Fuat’s thoughts on both translation criticism and theatre criticism are complementary to each other. Since both of his viewpoints on these two fields of studies compel one to cast a glance at Fuat’s *Doğumgünü Partisi* on the stage, and Şahinler’s *translation* of the *translation* thereof. This stare at the recent production of *Doğum Günü Partisi* by the City Theatre of Istanbul Municipality, inevitably entails a shift in the focus of theatre (translation) criticism from page to stage.

³⁴⁰ Antoine Berman, **Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne**, trans. and ed. Françoise Massardier-Kenney, Kent: Kent State University Press, 2009, p. 58, emphasis in the original.

³⁴¹ “Memet Fuat’la Konuştuk” [1953], in **Unutulmuş Yazılar**, Istanbul: Broy, 1986, p. 303

³⁴² See, Memet Fuat, “Çeviride Anlam” [1962], in **Çağımı Görebilmek**, Istanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1996, pp. 54-59, esp. 56

³⁴³ Özlem Berk, **Translation and Westernisation in Turkey, from the 1840s to the 1980s**, Istanbul: Ege Yayınları, 2004, pp. 213-214

³⁴⁴ “Memet Fuat’la Konuştuk” [1953], in **Unutulmuş Yazılar**, Istanbul: Broy, 1986, p. 301

Yıldıray Şahinler's *Doğum Günü Partisi*

In his monumental study on Jean Racine, Roland Barthes makes a vital observation regarding the French theatregoers of the 1960s: “*It appears that today’s public consumes Racine in a purely anthological fashion. In Phèdre it is the character of Phaedra one comes to see, and even more than Phaedra, the actress herself: how will she ‘do’ it?*”³⁴⁵ Although Barthes’ inspection is chiefly concerned with the reception of a neo-classic dramatist in the twentieth century, his remark appears to be valid for the productions of plays that are widely acclaimed as classics now in the twenty-first century. In this regard, the case of the productions of Harold Pinter’s *The Birthday Party* does not set an exception at all.

Not in the least the City Theatre of Istanbul Municipality production of the play in Turkey. This recent production of the piece was directed by Yıldıray Şahinler, who also starred as Stanley in the performance. The cast of the production attracts further notice. It includes Cem Davran, Mert Tanık, Jülide Kural, Özge Borak and Bahtiyar Engin in the roles of Goldberg, McCann, Meg, Lulu and Petey respectively.³⁴⁶ An attractive list of players comprised of names, certain of whom are widely recognised by the Turkish public through their works on telly and silver screen. A crowd-puller cast indeed. The fact that the production was a blockbuster from its debut on February until its theatre-season finale on April accounts for the enthusiasm of the Turkish theatregoers for Pinter.

Really for Pinter? Or for the cast? Or just for the love of theatre? One truly wonders at this point. Maybe the majority of the audience has come to see the actors themselves: “how will they ‘do’ it?”, as Barthes would have asked. How will they ‘do’ what though? A look—no: a gaze—at the audience comments on the production³⁴⁷ might be quite helpful in respect of the reception of the play. Now, some random examples for a solid idea about the reception of the production: “*the actors were very beautiful but we didn’t understand the theme of the play at the end of the play my husband and I looked at each other with incomprehension pity for the labour*”. Or: “*the play was boring and was very meaningless...even Cem Davran couldn’t save the play..there were too many meaningless dialogues. i waited [sic.] for it to finish...i don’t recommend it to anyone..pity for your time and money*”. Or: “*Over western too*

³⁴⁵ Roland Barthes, **On Racine**, trans. Richard Howard, Berkeley: University of California Press, [1964] 1992, p. 141

³⁴⁶ See Appendix A.

³⁴⁷ http://www.tiyatrodunyasi.com/tyatro_detay.asp?oyunid=448

absurd and too boring”. Or: “*we went today.the actors are good but the play is too boring only the beginning of the second scene [sic.] is entertaining*”. Or: “*i didn’t understand much of a thing though the decoration and the actors were extremely beautiful. Even if it gave a message I didn’t get the message.but it was a beautiful play*”. Or: “*i didn’t go to the play but it is obvious that it is very beautiful...i must go to it soon*”. Or: “*Greetings Itoo [sic.] saw the play on 02.04.2011 15: 00. I agree with all the comments above, the play was too boring but the actors were super, how fine it would be if such labour were used for another play.*” And so forth.

One can surely continue quoting the audience comments here but the fact remains that the reception of the production varies from its boringness, to an overall interest in the performances of the actors. In the light of the audience comments, it can thus be seen that the point for them was not *The Birthday Party*, not to mention the theatre of Pinter in the first place.

The production received mixed reviews from the Turkish theatrical circles as well. Melih Anık, for one, in his review of the City Theatre of Istanbul Municipality production of the play,³⁴⁸ touches upon the audience response to Pinter: “*The spectator wants to ‘understand’ what s/he spectated; wants to have a sentence about what s/he spectated, so that s/he too can have something to say about what s/he spectated.*” And then he pulls attention towards the significance of theatre criticism: “*The criticisms of plays are either too late, or too early; if reading criticism is not a habit it can be late, if the criticism read is not objective, then it can be unnecessary.*” Afterwards, he proceeds with an overview of the theatre of Pinter. As a matter of fact, in place of an in depth analysis of the performance, much of what Anık provides in his “review” of the production turns out to be a superficial gloss on Pinter meagrely supported by quotes from the explanation/s that Şahinler provides in the informative notes prepared for the audience prior to the performance. It is only towards the end of his writing (in the literal sense of the word) that Anık returns to the production itself: “*Within the framework of this writing, I would like to foreground Yıldırım Şahinler’s ability to direct, instead of his acting. It’s a very important detail that he enrobes Goldberg, McCann and Stanley with the same dress, and also a director’s ‘reading’. Even this detail causes me to extol him.*” Does Anık praise Şahinler or Pinter here? One cannot help but wondering once again. At this point of discussion, it is worth remembering how Anık himself rightly has underscored the importance of reading in his writing: “*I must say that the reason for me to*

³⁴⁸ <http://melihanik.blogcu.com/hakiki-ya-da-sahte-ve-dogum-gunu-partisi-harold-pinter-ibb/9808051>

watch the piece derives from my 'reading' before and after watching the play. That is, everybody can do it." Even so, knowing that the significant detail that Anık refers to in his writing, is, actually Pinter's own reading of his own play causes one to look askance at the grounds upon which he praises Şahinler to the skies. For as Jeannette Malkin maintains, "in Pinter's 1964 direction of the play, Stanley is dressed in a suit identical to those of Goldberg and McCann — being taken away in Goldberg's black limousine."³⁴⁹ Concerning the production, moreover, Anık makes also a mention of Memet Fuat's translation: "I felt that they have made minor changes in Memet Fuat's translation. I was not bothered." Then again, the grounds which have given rise to this comment cannot be found in Anık's writing. Here, Anık sounds not only as a theatre critic, but also a theatre-translation critic as if he has already provided a critical (re)reading of Fuat's *Doğumgünü Partisi* in his writing. In point of fact, this remark can be taken as a supreme example which demonstrates that "within the field of theatre criticism, translations, by and large, are taken for granted,"³⁵⁰ whereas "in translation, one cannot, one should not, be neutral,"³⁵¹ let alone the fact that there ever existed perfect, flawless and innocent translations. Even Fuat himself personally admits that his "translations are not perfect."³⁵²

Together with Anık, Gülin Dede Tekin responded to Şahinler's *Doğum Günü Partisi* with a review of the production.³⁵³ Tekin starts her concise examination with these words: "In order for me to be able to criticise, I thought that it would be necessary to have a command of the difference between the dramaturgy and staging; I was afraid of making wrong comments with imperfect knowledge; I desisted from writing, but still I couldn't avoid my will to say something, albeit at the least." After her introduction, Tekin points out to the two bases of her criticism: "the theatre of the absurd and Pinter." In her criticism of the production, Tekin calls the selection of the cast into question: "I do not approve that much that the inclusion of magazinish [sic.] names, such as Cem Davran, Özge Borak, or Jülide Kural who we see constantly on the television screen in a theatre movement, in which non-communication functions as the main theme." Unlike Anık, Tekin finds Şahinler's staging approach problematic while showing signs of compliment to his part in the production as Stanley. And

³⁴⁹ Jeannette R. Malkin, *Verbal Violence in Contemporary Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 67

³⁵⁰ Burç İdem Dinçel, *A Critical Study of the Turkish Translations of Samuel Beckett's Krapps's Last Tape and Its Interpretations within the Turkish Theatrical System*, unpublished MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2010, p. 10

³⁵¹ Antoine Berman, *Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne*, trans. and ed. Françoise Massardier-Kenney, Kent: Kent State University Press, 2009, p. 48

³⁵² "Memet Fuat'la Konuştuk" [1953], in *Unutulmuş Yazılar*, Istanbul: Broy, 1986, p. 303

³⁵³ <http://www.tiyatrodunyasi.com/makaledetay.asp?makaleno=1719>

then she concludes her examination of the production, by passing such critical remarks as overemphasis on comedy, the inconsonance of the music used, and individual performances of the actors. Nowhere in her review of the production, however, does Tekin touch on Fuat's translation.

What, in fact, has Şahinler done? To provide a definite answer to this question would stand for going against the grain of the significance that this paper attributed to the concept of criticism. Nonetheless, *depending upon* the dramaturgical analysis, as well as the successive descriptive theatre-translation criticism provided in the earlier sections of this paper, one can present an account of Şahinler's *Doğum Günü Partisi*.

Referring to the importance of informative notes addressed for the audience, Patrice Pavis highlights the vital part that they can play for the reception of the production. Due to the inclusion of materials organised for the purposes of information, "*reception will be prepared (should one say facilitated?) through an imposed understanding of the background, or through a summary of the plot, or even through the director's reflections on the work being staged.*"³⁵⁴ In the same place, Pavis also underscores the value of informative notes for the description of stage productions since "*one must take into account these imposed 'keys'*"³⁵⁵ In this particular respect, Şahinler's explanation vis-à-vis his *Doğum Günü Partisi* is worth to take a closer look. Şahinler is careful enough to outline his staging approach by alluding to the calibre of "external threat", "verbal violence" in Pinter's plays. But he refrains from attempting to give an account of them. Instead he says that, "*as I said, if it can, the play that you are going to see shortly after will do so.*" The fact that he counts on his production to be entirely aware of the dramaturgical traits of the play is noteworthy. In this particular regard, Şahinler stands on safe grounds. A quote from Pinter forms the backbone of Şahinler's succinct informative notes, or in Pavis' terms, his "imposed understanding" of the play: "*Everything is funny; the greatest earnestness is funny; even tragedy is funny. And I think what I try to do in my plays is to get to this recognizable reality of the absurdity of what we do and how we behave and how we speak.*"³⁵⁶ And Şahinler concludes his informative notes by speaking on behalf of the other actors: "*We elegantly saw this Pinter play as a comedy rather than a dark and a gloomy one and found it very absurd and comic; just like the life itself. We tried to present you a comedy.*"

³⁵⁴ Patrice Pavis, **Analyzing Performance**, trans. David Williams, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, p. 40

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Harold Pinter quoted in Martin Esslin, **The Theatre of the Absurd**, New York: Vintage, [1961] 2001, p. 242

And they did so. Still, it is worth handling Şahinler's explanation with care here. For the comic aspects of Fuat's *Doğumgünü Partisi* has been exaggerated in the production to such an extent that after a certain point, Şahinler's *Doğum Günü Partisi* turns out to be a farce, rather than a comedy, let alone a "comedy of menace". The verbal violence of the interrogation scene, for instance, becomes a "parody" of the popular culture. Thanks to the excessive emphasis placed on the comic aspects, one can barely sense the violence that has been already static in the first place in Fuat's translation. Whereas in Pinter's text, the verbal violence goes at full speed, in the production the lines of Davran and Tanık accelerate the comic line of action. This hyperbole on comedy, moreover, makes such crucial functions as the "inner" and "outer" actions of the play vanish into thin air. As a matter of fact, what one acquires in the course of the production is a pure farce. It is also imperative to point out that "pauses and silences", both of which can be regarded as the arteries of the dramaturgy of Pinter, gets "lost" in the shuffle of comedy. This point seems all the more crucial: whilst in Fuat's translation their function has already been reduced to signify identical actions, in Şahinler's *translation* of the *translation* they rarely signify actions, not to mention two different actions that either stand for a crisis points, or indicating moments of tension. If there stays any action of the play in the production, it remains so on the level of "outer" action. As a consequence of that, the production persists to continue on the plane of domestic/realistic/bourgeois farce; just like the way it started. The highly caricaturised performances of Kural, Borak and Engin can be taken as tokens of this observation.

Yet, the production itself is not without its merits. Perhaps the most effective aspect of the production, as both Anık and Tekin agree, is the stage design of Barış Dinçel.³⁵⁷ While Şahinler's staging approach *translates* the *translation* into a comedy through his "imposed understanding" of the play, Dinçel's stage design *translates* the overlapping of the real and surreal in Pinter's *play*. Şahinler's spectacular performance as Stanley gives one a pause though. Şahinler's concentration on his role, his complete silence after being deprived of his language, his persistence in carrying the (slight piece of) violence imposed upon him regardless of the acceleration of the comic elements especially in Davran's part, are all more than praiseworthy indeed. Even so, the overemphasis he places on the comic aspects of the play, in times where people are being subjected to the ultimate examples of verbal violence, where people are being taken without reasons to God knows where, makes one raise concerns

³⁵⁷ See Appendix B.

about his staging approach within the context of the perspective that has been offered during the course of this paper.

Concluding Note

Where criticism is honest as George Steiner maintains, “*it is passionate.*”³⁵⁸ The driving force behind this article has precisely been this remark that Steiner passes: a passion for theatre, a passion for translation, as well as a passion for offering and receiving criticism. Therefore, the present paper started with an emphasis on the illuminative function that criticism can acquire in the course of the interpretative journey that the receptors of the artworks would embark on. The aim of the paper was humble indeed: simply to offer a gaze at Harold Pinter’s *The Birthday Party*, the Turkish translation of the play by Memet Fuat, and the recent production of the piece by the City Theatre of Istanbul Municipality directed by Yıldırım Şahinler.

The point that this study intended to foreground was the need to shift the focus in theatre (translation) criticism so as to tackle the reception of the productions of plays in translation. In order to set the wheels of criticism in motion, therefore, the article provided a reading of Pinter’s play in tune with the dramaturgical traits that have been considered as crucial to the piece. Furthermore, rather than imposing a definite judgment on Fuat’s translation and Şahinler’s production thereof, the paper intended to describe their features simultaneously on “page” and on “stage” with the purpose of keeping the other doors of the interpretation open.

To be able to keep the other doors of the interpretation open: by reaping the benefit of this aspect of descriptive theatre (translation) criticism that the paper proposed, one might develop a more exhaustive approach to the study and practice of theatre (translation) criticism, than the present study attempted to establish.

³⁵⁸ George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, Yale: Yale University Press, [1961] 1996, p. 351



Appendix A – Şahinler's Doğum Günü Partisi



Appendix B – Stage Design of Barış Dinçel

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HAREKET HALİNDEKİ ELEŞTİRİ: HAROLD PINTER’İN *DOĞUMGÜNÜ PARTİSİ* OYUNU IŞIĞINDA TİYATRO (ÇEVİRİSİ) ELEŞTİRİSİNDE ODAK NOKTASINI SAYFADAN SAHNEYE TAŞIMAK

Öz

Tiyatro oyunlarının çevirisinin diğer edebi metinlerin çevirisinden farklı bir özelliğe sahip olduğu tartışma götürmez bir gerçektir. Her ne kadar bu gerçeğin ayırdına yeni yeni varılıyorsa da, araştırmacıların, tiyatro eserlerinin çevirilerini çoğunlukla yazınsal çeviri bağlamında masaya yatırmaları hâlâ geçerliliğini koruyan bir yaklaşım biçimidir. Daha da önemlisiyse bu yaklaşımın tiyatro (çevirisi) eleştirisinde de belirgin yansımaları olmasındır. Dolayısıyla, çoğu zaman için tiyatro (çevirisi) eleştirisi, eldeki oyun metnini sahne dinamiklerinden ziyade yazınsal çeviri açısından değerlendirmektedir. Sonra da durmaktadır. Oysa performans sayesinde hayat bulan tiyatro metinlerinin çevirilerine yönelik bir eleştirinin hareket halinde olması ve eleştirinin, çeviri metnin sahne üzerinde geçirdiği evreleri de dikkate alarak, prodüksiyon vasıtasıyla bu metnin nasıl alımlamandığını da mercek altına alması gerekmekte, hatta bu anlayış tiyatro (çevirisi) eleştirisinin zorunlu bir parçası haline gelmektedir.

*Bu makale bir anlamda, söz konusu zorunluluktan doğan bir çalışmadır. Tiyatro (çevirisi) eleştirisinde odak noktasını sayfadan sahneye taşıma gayesiyle makale, sırasıyla Harold Pinter’in *Doğum Günü Partisi* yapıtına, eserin Memet Fuat tarafından yapılan Türkçe çevirisine ve son olarak da Yıldırım Şahinler’in yönettiği İstanbul Belediyesi Şehir Tiyatroları’nın *Doğum Günü Partisi* prodüksiyonu üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Kuramsal*

çerçevesini betimleyici tiyatro (çevirisi) eleştirisinin oluşturduğu makalenin izlediği yöntemse, tiyatro çevirilerini metinsel ve sahnesel düzlemde ele alacak bir eleştiri modelidir. Bahsi geçen kuramsal çerçeve ve benimsenen yöntem doğrultusunda yazıda, öncelikli olarak Pinter'in metni üzerinden oyunun dramaturjik izleklerini saptanmıştır. Daha sonrasında makale, yapılan bu dramaturjik çözümleme ışığında oyunun Türkçe çevirisinin eleştirel bir okumasını sunmaya çalışmıştır. Yazının son bölümünde ise, tiyatro (çevirisi) eleştirisini sayfadan sahneye taşıma maksadıyla, Şahinler'in sahneleme anlayışı, prodüksiyonun alımlanması üzerinden masaya yatırılmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Çeviri, tiyatro çevirisi, tiyatro eleştirisi, Pinter

Abstract

It is an indisputable fact that translations of theatre plays have a different characteristic than those of the other literary texts. Although this fact is recently being recognised, the general approach of researchers regarding the issue still remains the same: the translations of theatre plays are tackled for the most part from the perspective of literary translation. What is more significant, is the certain repercussions of this approach on theatre (translation) criticism. As a matter of fact, rather than scrutinising the performance text under consideration from the dynamics of the stage, theatre (translation) criticism, by and large, provides an analysis within the context of literary translation. And then comes to a halt. Be that as it may, criticism towards such translated texts as theatre translations, of whose raison d'être depend on their performances on stage, becomes not only bound to take into account the phases that translated text goes through during the course of the production, but also obliged to take cognisance of the reception of the translation, the last point being an imperative aspect of theatre (translation) criticism.

*The present article, in a fashion, is a study emerging from this imperative aspect in question. In order to be able to shift the focus in theatre (translation) criticism, the article concentrates on Harold Pinter's **The Birthday Party**, the Turkish translation of the play by Memet Fuat, as well as the City Theatre of Istanbul Municipality production of the piece directed by Yıldray Şahinler respectively. Whilst "descriptive theatre (translation) criticism" forms the backbone of the theoretical framework of this study, its methodology derives benefit from a model of theatre (translation) criticism that aims to monitor the textual and scenic dimensions of plays in translation. To this end, the paper initially establishes the*

dramaturgical traits of Pinter's text. Later on, in view of the dramaturgical analysis undertaken the article aims to propose a critical reading of the Turkish translation of the play. With the purpose of shifting theatre (translation) criticism from page to stage, moreover, the last section of the article discusses Şahinler's staging approach in detail through the reception of the production.

Keywords: *Translation, theatre translation, theatre criticism, Pinter*